

Workers' power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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As the recession bites and sackings mount...

Make the bosses pay!

WHEN THE Tories' economic "miracle" first started to go wrong one cabinet minister after another went on television to deny that there was a recession in Britain. Now, the same Tories, minus Thatcher, cannot continue this big lie.

Britain is in a deep recession. Investment in both manufacturing and service industries is plummeting. The government is predicting a 9% fall in manufacturing output this year. UK car sales crashed by over a fifth in the first three months of this year.

And there is no end in sight. The CBI leader, Banham, bemoaned last month that the economy was "bad and getting worse"; that it would be "well towards the end of the year" before there would be any change in economy.

The British Chamber of Commerce survey concluded that signs of recovery are "faint and elusive".

Behind the figures lies the painful cost of capitalism's economic madness for millions. The legacy of Thatcher's "popular capitalism" and Lawson's economic "miracle" is a dole queue that grew faster over the last two months than at any time since the 1930s.

The figures released in April revealed that there were now over two million unemployed. Between this year and the end of 1992 the engineering bosses say they will have destroyed 210,000 jobs in the industry—10% of the entire workforce.

Unemployment is set to rise once again to more than three million by 1992.

The misery and damage that unemployment inflicts on working class people is incalculable. Families wrecked, suicides increasing, living standards slashed, youth driven in desperation to crime—and punishment.

This human cost is the reality of the recession. It is a cost that the working class must refuse to pay.

Today the Tories have no excuses. In 1980 they claimed that the jobs massacre was necessary to make industry competitive, that it was the inevitable result of Labour's mismanagement, that it would lead to lasting prosperity.

Now it's clear that it's not simply policies and governments, but capitalism itself that stands condemned.

The bosses have rounded on the Tories. The IMF, the Chambers of Commerce, the Institute of Directors and the CBI last month all blamed the Tories for the crisis.

Labour was jumping for joy. But here lies the big problem for the working class.

What the bosses are demanding is an attack on pay, bigger and more drastic cuts in public spending, wage restraint in the form of "assessments" responsive to market forces, cuts in the length of time sacked workers are given unemployment benefit.

Labour are putting themselves forward as the party that can carry through at least some of these policies on behalf of the bosses.

The deputy leader of the TGWU said, after the April rise in unemployment, that there were "now over two million reasons for an immediate general election".

Yet Labour have not made a single pledge to cut unemployment. They have not made a single firm commitment on expanding public spending.

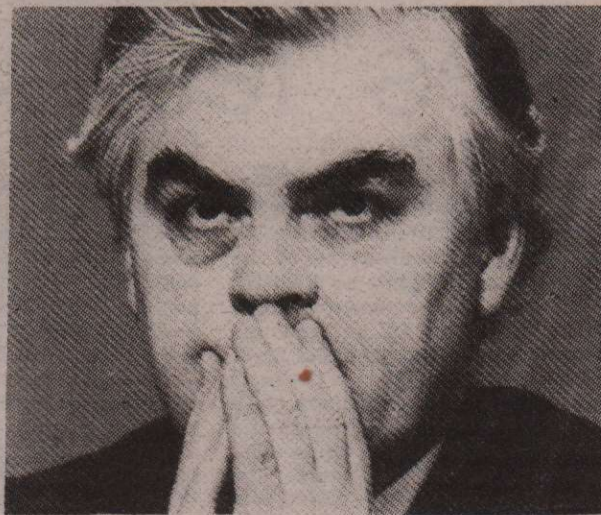
They are promising to keep the unions chained by anti-union laws. They are offering to keep wages down through their "national economic assessment".

Workers cannot afford to wait for Labour to win a general election. They cannot risk their livelihoods on the gamble that Kinnock will deliver them from the nightmare of capitalist crisis.

Our jobs must be defended now. The fight must be launched to make the bosses pay for *their* crisis.

With the Tories and the bosses attacking each other there could not be a better time to launch a fightback.

Every threat of sackings or closure needs to be met with strike action and occupations, demanding the defence of all jobs, the immediate imple-



Make Norman lament

mentation of the 35 hour week for all and for all available work to be shared amongst all workers with no loss of pay.

The ranks of the unemployed must not be abandoned to desperation. The labour movement must fight to impose the principle of work or full pay on the bosses.

To get such a fight, however, every militant will have to begin a struggle against

their own union leaders.

As the demolition of industries and services has progressed the union leaders, desperate to avoid any sort of fightback, desperate to maintain their image of responsible new realists, have refused to offer any resistance. They are as guilty as the bosses for the crime of rising unemployment. They need to be overthrown, in every union, by militants who are prepared to lead a fight. In the months and years ahead new layers of workers, young workers recruited to the unions in the Thatcher years of defeat, will come to the fore. They must learn that the defeats of the 1980s were not inevitable. They were caused by traitors in our own ranks.

These workers must be armed with revolutionary answers, won to a revolutionary party, so that they know how to deal with those traitors and how to make the 1990s a decade of working class victories.

- **Don't wait for Labour!**
- **Don't pay for the crisis!**
- **Start the fightback now!**

WHEN IT comes to children the hypocrisy of the tabloid press knows no limits. Over the last few months it has supplied millions of readers with stories about the nation's children being the victims of ritualistic abuse at the hands of Satanists. But it alternates these stories with real witch-hunts against "heartless" social workers who remove children from their families when they suspect that such abuse has taken place.

Intense publicity has been given to the cases of alleged ritualistic abuse in Nottingham, Manchester, Rochdale and Orkney. And in each instance the clamour against the Satanists has given way to calls for social workers to be (at least symbolically) burnt at the stake.

Nine Orkney children were seized from home and spent five weeks forcibly separated from their parents before the Sheriff dismissed the case as "fatally flawed". He argued that neither the evidence nor the procedures used were satisfactory.

Evidence

The evidence is equally thin on the ground in the other cases of alleged satanic rituals. In the Nottingham case there was clear evidence of terrible abuse—nine adults were jailed in 1989 after pleading guilty to 53 charges of incest, cruelty and indecent assault. But the accusations that abuse took place in ritualistic ceremonies were not made until after the trial. In both the Manchester and Rochdale cases the majority of children were returned to their parents and no evidence of satanic abuse has stood up to investigation.

How have these stories of satanic abuse gained such wide currency and driven social workers into the extreme action of taking children away from parents? The moral panic, fed by the tabloids, is based on propaganda peddled by dubious Christian sects and given credence by the ultra-respectable National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and its Scottish counterpart (NSPCC and RSSPCC).

The Orkney case followed hard on the heels of a conference held in Aberdeen addressed by a leader of the Reachout Trust, a Christian organisation, providing support for "victims of the occult". Other self-proclaimed experts in the field in-

The ritual abuse of social workers

clude the American, Pamela Klein, whom a US judge recently ruled to be "not a legitimate therapist". Her intervention was crucial in the Nottingham case, where she persuaded social workers they were dealing with satanic abuse.

The NSPCC claims that seven out of its 66 social work teams are dealing with allegations of ritual abuse. Lately it has come under criticism from courts and local authorities and, except for three authorities, it no longer runs the child abuse registers in local authorities in England and Wales. Yet the RSSPCC was allowed to have considerable influence in the Orkney affair and was part of a special interviewing team.

Lying behind the moral panic about child abuse being the work of the devil is a refusal to face up to the reality of child abuse as a product of class society, a product of material circumstances in the capitalist family structure. The roots of physical, sexual and emotional abuse are deep within this stifling and oppressive structure. Blaming these horrors on dark forces conveniently masks this



truth for many Christians who uphold and sanctify the traditional family. They cannot acknowledge that good Christians, free of Satan's influence, are quite capable of abusing children.

Physical abuse and exploitation

of children go hand in hand with poverty and deprivation. And in the last ten years the number of children living in poverty in the UK has doubled.

Sexual abuse of children, while by no means confined to one class,

is made easier by the dependent relationship of children and women within the family. Children are at the mercy of adults—and all the professional talk of "empowering children" will be of little use when children remain in that dependent relationship.

Those who seek explanations in satanic influences rather than the material world do victims a grave disservice. Their cranky theories disguise both the real levels and real causes of abuse and end up making it easier for adults who abuse children to continue.

Meanwhile social workers have been bearing the brunt of the verbal abuse from the media, the police and the judiciary. Social workers are currently facing increased workloads under community care legislation and the Children's Act. They are also facing vicious cuts in the resources available to them. The Tories' onslaught on local government spending hits the ability of local authorities to provide services—including social work.

In Rochdale, where the social services inspectors criticised the social workers for not updating guidelines and not involving parents, they also pointed out that staff had been distracted by plans to restructure the department and morale was low because of proposals to cut £1.9 million from the social services budget.

Class war prisoners

THERE ARE more than thirty poll tax protesters still in jail as a result of the courts' determination to hand out exemplary sentences to the Trafalgar Square defendants. The police followed their attack on last year's mass demonstration by dragging hundreds of young people through the courts. For many this has meant the loss of jobs as well as jailings and fines.

One of the latest victims is Matt Lee of the Birmingham Anti-Poll Tax Federation, who has been sent down

for two and a half years. Matt spent much of his time before he was incarcerated working for other defendants through the Trafalgar Square Defence Campaign. Now it is his turn to receive our support.

The Birmingham Poll Tax Prisoners Support Group is asking for messages of support and funds and will provide speakers for trade union branches.

Contact: BTPPSG, c/o Exton Gardens, Black Patch, Smethwick B66 2LT

Anti-Fascist Action

THREE MEMBERS of AFA are currently serving prison sentences of between three and four years resulting from anti-fascist activities. Send letters and messages of support to:

Tony David (NT 1338), Blundeston Prison, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR 5RG

Mark Malin (NT 1335), The Veme Prison, Portland, Dorset DT5 1EQ

David Phelan (NT 1337) Bisley Prison, Woking, Surrey GU24 9EX

The bosses' league

LIKE COUNT Dracula, the "Super League" just refuses to die. Once again the bloodsuckers at the Football Association (FA)—English football's overall governing body—are trying to get the "top" eighteen clubs of the Football League to break away from the rest and form a semi-autonomous "premier division" or "super league".

The full details will be revealed at the end of June when the FA meets with the leading bureaucrats of the English Football League's four divisions. But, in outline, what the FA wants is to take control of the present First Division for the 1992-93 season and reduce it from 22 to 18 clubs over a maximum of five years. They would have ultimate control, but the new "super league" would be commercially autonomous with an "independent chairman".

Clubs in the new structure would be expected to meet certain standards—standards concerned less with the quality of play than with stadium capacity and other forms of financial pulling power. The Football League would then only have jurisdiction over the present 2nd, 3rd and 4th divisions. At the end of each season only one club would be promoted from the Football League's newly dominated First Division and one

would go down from the FA run "Premier Division" to the Football League.

Behind all the bureaucratic scheming and sermons about the benefits to the "game as a whole" lies a nauseating commercial stink. Quite simply the FA, acting in accordance with the capitalist profit motive, want the "Premier Division" to cream off the lion's share of TV and other sponsorship to ensure the commercial stability of the existing "big" clubs. Martin Edwards, the chairman of Manchester United, said that a super league would "give everybody time to plan ahead... inevitably there are going to be casualties... but it is important to the long term future of the game. The important principle is that the leading clubs will be in control of their own destiny".

What Edwards really means is that the directors of the big clubs want no more financial crises and uncertainties. These capitalists want their profits guaranteed and their investments secured. They need a structure to ensure their financial survival at the expense of any potential upstarts from the lower divisions—those who might have the temerity to challenge their status by simply being more successful on the field than they are. It is like the develop-

ment of monopolies in industry. The "Big Five" (Liverpool, Everton, Manchester United, Arsenal and Tottenham) along with a few other clubs will, under the auspices of the FA, combine to squeeze out the smaller enterprises.

Bill Fox, the Football League's president, has outlined his organisation's opposition to the breakaway plan. But scratch the surface of his argument and you discover that the League and the FA are really after the same thing. What these bureaucrats are arguing over is who gets their noses in the commercial trough—who will control the super league? Their commercial propositions are almost identical and with projected sponsorship deals estimated to be worth £50 million—more than double the present amount—the stakes are very high.

What the supporters' and players' organisations rightly fear is that struggling clubs in the lower divisions will have to go part-time or fold up altogether. No longer will much needed sponsor's cash be shared out amongst the four divisions even in the way it is now—biased towards the clubs that are already wealthy. They will get crumbs if they get anything at all.

Players and staff will be thrown on

to the dole and many fans will find dreams of FA Cup glory and League success snatched away. Hundreds of thousands of workers who pour millions of pounds a year of their hard earned cash into supporting "their" teams week after week will be even further dispossessed—all so that business parasites can further exploit "The People's Game".

The Professional Footballers Association (PFA)—the nearest thing to a players' union—and the Football Supporters Association (FSA) are joining forces to oppose this rotten scheme. In 1986 the threat of a players' strike helped scupper similar proposals. Such action will be needed again. But a purely defensive lobby and protest will leave the game vulnerable to continued attack from the directors, the FA and the League. Player and supporter activists must be arguing for democratic control of the game and banish the commercial parasites for good.

Workers must fight for the sport to be nationalised under the control of players, rank and file staff and supporters. It is only when sport serves the interests of the fans and participants, when players are not bought and sold under semi-feudal contracts and the self-serving interests of big business are booted out that true sport can really begin. Then hooligans of the FA, the League management committee, and the club boardrooms can be more usefully employed—cleaning the players' boots. ■

Workload

A survey by the Association of Directors of Social Services in March this year showed that over half of social service departments were facing cuts. This was happening despite the extra workload created by the new legislation. Many councils did not expect to be able to fully fund legislative changes in children's welfare and community care. One in ten social work posts nationally is not filled.

The wretched hypocrites of the tabloids who wring their hands over abused children are the first to launch attacks on "loony left" councils for overspending. An unprecedented number of children and young people—many of them victims of abuse—are on the streets while councils are prevented from building affordable homes and are being forced to cut child welfare. And neither Satanism nor social workers can be blamed for this. ■

EDITORIAL

An incomes policy by any other name

THROWN OUT of the corridors of power by the Tories in 1979 the General Council of the TUC has, in recent years, confined itself to arbitrating between the different factions of the trade union bureaucracy. Membership poaching, scabbing allegations and the rest of the dirty linen of the world of trade union officialdom have been sent to Great Russell Street for cleaning.

Over the last few months Norman Willis has been trying to clean up the untidy mess of the unions' attitude to pay policy under a future Labour Government. At last, after much squabbling between TUC affiliates, Norm emerged triumphant with a new policy statement entitled: "Collective Bargaining in the 1990s". Better, he managed the remarkable, if puzzling, feat of getting it "accepted unanimously without being put to the vote" at April's General Council meeting.

The final version was stitched together by Bill Jordan of the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) and Rodney Bickerstaffe of the public sector workers' union NUPE. Jordan and Bickerstaffe had been sent off to find a formula which would allow the engineers to claim that they had maintained a commitment to unfettered collective bargaining while allowing the likes of Bickerstaffe to tell their members the TUC was now committed to campaigning for a legally binding minimum wage.

For any class conscious trade unionist there should be no problem with combining the two. Fighting for a national minimum wage should be part of a strategy to prevent the bosses' super-exploitation of young and women workers and provide protection against firms attempting to drive down the general level of wages.

At the same time the working class must resist all legal shackles and voluntary pacts which undermine the ability of strong and skilled sections to use all the weapons at their disposal to increase the reward for

their labour. Both struggles are necessary to resist the constant pressure from the capitalists to increase productivity and profits at the expense of workers' living standards.

But militant resistance to the capitalists is not part of the General Council's strategy. They—indeed the whole tribe of trade union officials—have another aim. They are desperate to see the return of a Labour government.

They think this will give them a renewed influence in industrial and economic policy and increase their status in their own, if not their members', eyes. So "Collective Bargaining in the 1990s" is actually the TUC's plan for collaboration with an incoming Labour government. It is here that the headaches begin for the trade union bureaucracy over pay policy.

The Labour and TUC leadership have come up with the idea of a yearly "National Economic Assessment" (NEA) involving government, bosses and unions. This would provide the "framework" in which wages would be negotiated—in other words an incomes policy by any other name. The original draft of the TUC document presented the NEA as a package from which low paid workers could expect a better deal. The better paid should hold back.

One wing of the TUC is seeking such an explicit commitment. Shopworkers' union leader Garfield Davies told the Scottish TUC that "the national minimum wage is in itself a form of incomes policy". Postal workers' union (UCW) leader Alan Tuffin has been leading the campaign for a "New Bargaining Agenda". The UCW put down motions to both the Scottish and Welsh TUC, calling for "a greater synchronisation of pay bargaining against a background of discussion with a Labour Government and employers about economic priorities and financial constraints".

But the craft union leaders cannot swallow such open proposals for an incomes policy. Their weight in

the TUC ensured they did not appear in any of the agreed motions or in the General Council's document. The trade union "lefts" are also officially committed to oppose wage restraint. But their commitment to bringing in a new Labour government at any cost undermines this opposition. Ron Todd of the TGWU told the Welsh TUC that he "could see the need for a broad economic assessment".

The "left" defence of the NEA revolves around the advantages to trade unions of co-ordinating claims. But Labour's proposals make clear that far from encouraging cross-union solidarity in struggle, the NEA is intended to introduce centralised pay bargaining with the aim of holding wages down. As *Labour News* puts it, the NEA "will set out clearly and honestly what the economy can afford in terms of investment, spending and pay."

The left and right of the trade union bureaucracy may argue about precise formulations but the declared unanimity around the NEA idea indicates that everyone is prepared to subordinate their members' interests to the goal of a Labour government. Labour and the TUC are working hand in glove to persuade the bosses that Labour can be trusted to deliver wage restraint.

That is why, at every union conference coming up, and in every union forum, we should oppose the TUC's plans, expose the NEA as a tool for the bosses' offensive and argue for extending the struggle on the wages' front. Instead of co-operation with the bosses we should seek co-ordination between workers. That should start now with support for the railworkers, and all others fighting against the bosses and government offensive on wages this summer. ■

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Militant's "real" labourism

IN THE local elections Neil Kinnock has demonstrated, once again, that he will brook no opposition to his ever more right wing method of running and projecting the Labour Party. In Liverpool Kinnock decided that one third of all ward parties could not be trusted to put forward candidates that they had selected themselves. Eleven safe Kinnock loyalists were imposed on the wards. Every one of them are supporters of the massive cuts being carried out by the ruling Labour council.

But in six wards, locally selected and supported candidates have refused to back down in the face of Kinnock's diktat. With the support of the *Militant* they stood in the elections against the official Labour candidates.

Impostors

The decision to stand against Kinnock's gang of impostors is to be welcomed. It is a tactic for which Workers Power has long argued. Time and again, at the Knowsley North by-election, in Nottingham when black left winger Sharon Atkin was removed on Kinnock's say so, and in Vauxhall when Martha Ossamor was replaced by the line-toeing Kate Hoey, the Labour Party leadership has ridden roughshod over the rights and wishes of local Labour party members and activists.

On each occasion, Workers Power argued for the democratically se-

lected candidate to refuse to give in, and to stand against the imposed stooges. And on each occasion our arguments were rejected by Labour lefts who were afraid of the consequences of such a direct challenge to Kinnock. That included *Militant* supporters.

Pressure

It seems that even now *Militant* have only changed their position under pressure from non-aligned activists within the Broad Left in the council unions.

The argument that we always used to hear from *Militant* supporters (as well as from *Socialist Organiser* who even in Liverpool supported the imposed candidates) was that to stand against the official candidates would be "playing into the hands of the right wing". Workers Power supporters replied by saying that the opposite was the case.

Of course, nobody on the left was trying to split the Labour vote for the hell of it. But in throwing out candidates that they didn't like, regardless of democracy, the right wing were showing that they didn't give a damn about unity. They were quite prepared to split local parties, to disaffiliate whole constituency organisations if necessary, in order to defeat the left.

By rolling over and playing dead in the name of unity the left didn't make Kinnock's job more difficult, they made it easier. They taught



him that he could get away with murder and would not face any electorally embarrassing opposition from within the party for doing so. The only unity that the left ended up preserving was the unity of silence and submission to a right wing clique pushing blatantly capitalist policies. Small wonder that Kinnock was so successful in marginalising them.

The key to the false arguments of the Labour left on this question lies in their failure to understand what sort of party Labour is. Even today *Militant* gets it wrong. Their view is summed up by Frank Heggarty, one of the "six real Labour candidates", in *Mersey Militant*:

"I'm standing in the traditions of the real Labour Party—the traditions of socialism. The real Labour

Party would never have made redundancies and sent in Poll Tax bailiffs."

Yes it would. Every Labour council and every Labour government in history has attacked the working class. In Scotland it was Labour councils who sent the bailiffs in during the first year of the Poll Tax. In the last period of a Labour government (1974 to 1979) the troops were sent in to break strikes by firefighters and ambulance drivers. The Special Patrol Group was sent in to batter pickets during the Grunwicks strike. And these examples are just the tip of the iceberg as far as the real Labour Party's history of attacks on the working class is concerned.

When Frank goes on to call Labour "a working class party" he has only stated half of the equation. It is certainly based on workers' organisations and workers' support, but its politics are completely pro-capitalist and always have been.

Opposition

The impunity with which the party leadership can quash all signs of rank and file opposition is proof that *Militant's* long held aim of transforming the Labour Party lock, stock and barrel into a socialist party is wrong. While the right wing control the party apparatus they will bureaucratically stifle any effective socialist opposition.

The left reformists will be faced with the question of whether they

are prepared to break with the right organisationally as well as politically. And they will always cower before the right when faced with this choice.

Unlike the Socialist Workers Party, Workers Power has never called on socialists to turn their backs on the fight against the right wing within the Labour Party and to abandon the party to Kinnock, Gould and their ilk without a struggle to make their job a lot harder. But to fight the right wing consistently means not to fear the consequences, which can only mean an organisational break with an apparatus that will not allow its members to fight for revolutionary socialist ideas.

A willingness to stand against undemocratically imposed candidates can be the starting point for such a break with reformism.

Individual

This does not mean simply calling on people to leave on an individual basis. A revolutionary tendency in the Labour Party, whilst never making Kinnock's job easy for him, would have to be prepared to continue the fight for socialism outside the party. That is why it would reject the idea of "returning Labour to its socialist roots"—roots it never had—and would try to win Labour members, including whole ward parties if possible, to a different type of party altogether: a combat party of dedicated revolutionary socialists.

Despite a correct if long overdue challenge to the Kinnockites in Liverpool, *Militant* are still not prepared to draw the full conclusions of the sad history of the Labour left in the 1980s. ■

Council cut backs

MANCHESTER

MANCHESTER LABOUR Council has repeatedly shown its willingness to destroy jobs and services. In each case, co-operation from NALGO, NUPE and GMB officials has been vital to management in forcing the cuts through.

This has been demonstrated again in what is traditionally the most militant and best organised section in Manchester Council—the Housing Department. This year management restructuring proposals aimed to break down demarcation lines within the department, get lower paid staff to do tasks formerly carried out by better paid workers, and increase management supervision. In the face of a one day protest strike against restructuring management took disciplinary action against 87 strikers.

In response, a Workers Power supporter proposed to the stewards' committee that members should refuse to attend the disciplinary hearings, that an all-out departmental strike be called until the disciplinaries were lifted, and demand the officials ballot the membership to make the strike official. This was rejected in favour of a much weaker formula advanced by the SWP, who have considerable influence in the department.

The SWP claimed that the mood was not there for a fight, and that we would have to "take the medicine", i.e. attend the disciplinaries. Instead of unofficial action they proposed that the union simply demand that the officials hold a ballot for (unspecified) industrial action, which the officials had already made clear they would not do.

The membership were less inclined to capitulate. At Moss Side Area Office, the first office to be threatened with disciplinary proceedings, a resolution, calling for the same actions as the one proposed by Workers Power to the stewards' committee, was passed on the very next day.

The SWP switched their position under pressure from the members, but by the departmental meeting the following week they had backtracked. They argued that members should refuse to attend the disciplinaries, but not take strike action and merely demand the officials ballot for industrial action, again unspecified.

This position was completely irresponsible as those boycotting their disciplinaries would need strike action in their defence.

This vacillation, and the failure of the stewards' committee to give a lead at its original meeting, were pounced on by the bureaucrats who proposed a deal with management, that the disciplinaries be lifted in return for a guarantee that members would never take unofficial action again. The officials' line was narrowly passed, with the meeting having been packed out by the bureaucrats with scabs and management members.

The SWP's method of tailing the spontaneous militancy of the members, rather than fighting from the outset for what is necessary to win, played right into the hands of the union officials. In order to overturn the officials' resolution an all out departmental wide strike is necessary, spreading into the branch for solidarity action. A real rank and file body, capable of challenging and throwing out the bureaucrats across the branch, is needed if victory is to be achieved. ■



LAMBETH

LAMBETH COUNCIL is pressing ahead with a £20 million cuts programme. Community groups and voluntary sector organisations have been summoned at a moment's notice to urgent sub-committees where their jobs and the services they provide have been voted away in a matter of seconds.

Resistance so far has been sporadic. Community groups and trade unions did organise occupations of the initial sub-committees but were eventually outmanoeuvred, with councillors meeting behind closed doors (Lambeth's commitment to open government!) and with the town hall protected by private security guards.

Housing workers in NALGO took a day's strike action against redundancies, which was well supported, but a massive vote in favour of all out strike action on May 1 was thwarted by the local bureaucrats who, instead of calling all members out, are leaving it up to each branch to decide whether to strike.

Workers and residents at the Lambeth and Streatham consumer advice centres have set an example for workers across the borough, by occupying their projects and kicking management out! Meanwhile, one-time anti-cuts leader Joan Twelves has shown her solidarity with Lambeth workers by awarding top council officers a 20% pay rise, taking salaries up to £60,000 and doubling her own allowance to more than £10,000.

Lambeth Against the Cuts, a loose coalition of trade union militants and anti-cuts councillors has failed to challenge the bureaucrats by building a campaign for all-out strikes and occupations, under rank and file control.

Early meetings attracted between fifty and one hundred workers, but the anger—and the turnout—have dissipated, with the first round of redundancies going through while the anti-cuts committee held out only the vague promise of action on

1 May!

With Heseltine's decision to cap the council there are another £8 million cuts to come. We need to prepare the ground now. Every shop, every branch should be committed now to taking strike action when the next round of cuts is put on the agenda.

The fight against the cuts is hampered by the witch-hunting of Walworth Road. Local wards have been banned by Labour head office at Walworth Road from affiliating

to the Lambeth Against the Witch-hunt campaign.

Among some Labour party members there is still a mood of resistance. When Workers Power supporters in Town Hall ward called on the local party to defy the suspensions and to break the ban by affiliating to the campaign, half the ward voted with us. This is in sharp contrast to the attitude of the council's Labour group which is relying on the bosses' courts to overturn the suspensions. ■

LIVERPOOL

MICHAEL HESELTINE probably thought he had heard the last of Liverpool after he tried to soften the impact of the recession in the early 1980s by staging the International Garden Festival there. He hadn't bargained for the militancy of the city's working class.

Since the defeat of the *Militant* led council struggle in the mid-1980s Liverpool has been ruled by a Labour group forced to bend its knee to Kinnock's moderate and legalist policies. Today the council is dominated by a right wing gang around local Labour leader, Harry Rimmer. He is spearheading a determined effort by the council to make its own workforce pay the price of a legal budget.

At the centre of Rimmer's cuts package is a proposed 1,000 plus redundancies. Many of these are to be compulsory. In a city with one of the highest unemployment rates in the country this action, by a party that claims to be acting in the interests of the working class

is a disgrace. But Rimmer hasn't been able to get away with his attacks yet. He has been challenged in the local elections by independent anti-cuts candidates (see page 3). And amongst the council unions there has been a groundswell of resistance.

The Joint Trades Union Committee (JTUC) organised strike action by ten different unions. During a three day strike against the proposed redundancies numbers on strike swelled from 22,000 at first to 27,000. A 4,000 strong demo was held and a picket was attacked by the police resulting in the arrest of 13 strikers. At the moment around 350 workers are on indefinite strike.

This display of militancy shows that the power to beat the cuts is there. But the JTUC are making a big mistake by limiting the numbers on indefinite action and using the others only for selective action. The argument from the influential *Militant* supporters is that we need to prepare the ground for

Tube sackings

TRAINS STUCK in tunnels, rush hour evacuations of central London stations for electrical fires—such incidents are the everyday lot of London commuters who pay Western Europe's highest fares to ride on its most antiquated underground system.

Now London Underground Limited (LUL) bosses are bent on a further attack on commuters and tube workers alike. Management are out to axe up to 1,800 jobs, from eighty train drivers to hundreds of station and office staff.

This latest threat to jobs has triggered an angry response throughout the highly stressed, 15,000 strong workforce. Even the traditionally passive white collar union, TSSA, has voted two to one for strike action, while members of the RMT have followed suit. In reply, LUL have threatened a single warning and then the sack for any worker taking industrial action.

Though obliged by the members' anger to call ballots, RMT bureaucrats like General Secretary Jimmy Knapp are certain to call for limited one day strikes, hitting one line at a time. This is a recipe for a needlessly protracted battle, which would squander the current anger and could sow the seeds of disunity. Unfortunately, the unofficial organisation of line co-ordinators amongst the drivers and guards, which launched the 1989 pay battle, has not reappeared to date.

An elected, all-union strike committee, cutting across sectional and racial divisions and fully accountable to mass meetings, is an urgent necessity if the bosses' attacks are to be beaten.

Militants should fight to transform any industrial action into all out indefinite strike as the only adequate response to an axe-wielding management.

As a minimum, tube workers must battle to force LUL to scrap all its proposed redundancies and claw-backs on conditions. In addition, they should seize this opportunity to defy the union leaderships and forge close links with British Rail workers in their pay battle and with beleaguered London bus crews facing the immediate threat of privatisation. ■

action step by step. They argue that selective action is the way to do this.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The bitterness amongst the overwhelming majority of workers was revealed by the size of the three day strike. That bitterness is there now. If we leave it for months before mobilising it in all out action the anger and energy will be dissipated. The chance to win exists now. We must not delay. Rimmer and his cronies are isolated, the workers are ready to fight.

The JTUC has the power to call all out action. *Militant* argued against such action until after the local elections. This was wrong. But it is still not too late to take the struggle forward. The JTUC should organise a series of mass meetings, addressed by the workers on all-out strike, putting the case for an immediate council wide all out strike until Rimmer withdraws every single redundancy threat. ■

THE BATTLE lines are being drawn over education in the pre-election period. In one corner, John Major (6 O levels and a banking qualification). In the other Neil Kinnock (unknown O levels, three A levels and a degree). Even the future monarch has pitched in.

Politicians and princes alike are concentrating their fire on educational standards. Backed up by the right wing press, the Tories have diverted attention away from the fact that it has been under their decade of government that reading standards have fallen. They have blamed "progressive" educational methods and teachers. One result of this is to try to force teachers and seven year old pupils to spend fruitless hours slaving over the Standard Assessment Tests (SATs).

Reshape

The SATs are part of a Tory strategy to reshape education for the needs of British capital. The Tories plan to reintroduce selection and subordinate education to training. British industry is faced with a serious problem of lack of trained and skilled labour—largely because its weak profitability has meant that the bosses have consistently refused to fund training.

This can only be achieved by wresting control away from the local authorities and streamlining education provision so that children are selected (via SATs) and prepared for particular roles in life. The Tories want to ensure that working class children are trained to take their place in the jobs allotted for them—but that no more funds than necessary are expended on the frills of education.

This means that for every "centre of excellence" there must be many underfunded schools where pupils must make do with poor resources, large classes and sub-standard education.

Testing time in the classroom

Of course, the Tories can hardly be open about this. Teachers are for the most part committed to the comprehensive school principle and working class parents will hardly vote for a party which intends to increase class privilege in education. So the reforms to date have been introduced under the banner of increasing parental control and "choice".

The Education Reform Act of 1986 (ERA) laid the basis for the attack on local authority control of education. Open enrolment broke the power of local authorities to redistribute resources within their areas. Parents can now choose to send their child where they want. In practice this means middle class parents work the system to their own advantage.

Local Management of Schools (LMS) means that schools' budgets are decided on the basis of numbers—the better the examination results, the more on the school roll, the larger the budget. The rest can whistle.

Meanwhile, the opt-out provision allows individual schools to

TOO MUCH SELF EXPRESSION AND NOT ENOUGH ATTENTION TO SPELLING, YOUNG SHAKSPER.



be funded directly from central government. So far these schools have been treated generously by the Department of Education and Science (DES). Effectively Whitehall is trying to bribe heads and governors. In many cases the schools opting out had already been identified for closure by local authorities trying to meet govern-

ment targets on school places and spending!

Education Minister Kenneth Clarke is now looking to relax the rules controlling parental ballots, making it easier for more parents to press for their school to opt out.

The right wing educational lobby, led by Rhodes Boyson and the Campaign for Real Education, is pressing for faster and more extensive changes. They want to see a complete end to local authority control. Heseltine's tactic of reducing Poll Tax bills by funding education centrally, prepares the ground for direct Whitehall control.

Clarke has already announced his intention to take further education and tertiary colleges out of the hands of the local authorities and subordinate them to the needs of industry. The curriculum in both schools and colleges is increasingly being geared to vocational outcomes with the increased use of Business and Technical Education Council (BTEC) courses.

Of course, the children of the bourgeoisie will not have to follow the same narrow vocational path. In privileged grant maintained or public schools, they can continue with a broad and well funded curriculum. When Prince Charles and his ilk call for a return to basics and Shakespeare they mean basics for the masses while their own children have access to culture and literature.

To push through these changes the Tories have to break the resistance of the teachers' organisations to the changes. Their carrot is the Independent Pay Review Body with the suggestion of improved pay in return for a "silent agreement not to strike". But there

will be plenty of sticks as well—enforcing SATs and in the long term encouraging local pay bargaining.

The Tories' plans must be defeated. The fightback means not only a fight over pay and the right to free collective bargaining but also a successful campaign against SATs. Already parents in Scotland have effectively killed the tests by withdrawing children. Although the law is different in England, the local authorities and central government would be hard-pressed to enforce the SATs against a mass boycott. But teacher involvement is also vital.

The NUT bureaucracy is trying its best to undermine the ballot for action to boycott SATs. The balloting process won't be finished until after the testing! But teachers at school level can still be won to taking action if they have the support of parents and their local associations.

Campaigns need to be built in every school and area uniting teachers and parents with meetings explaining the issues and how SATs, far from being a guarantee of standards, are part of a Tory strategy to reintroduce selection and restrict the educational opportunities for the majority of the nation's children.

Bluster

The fight against SATs must become part of a struggle to defend and improve education for all. Waiting for Labour—the preferred strategy of NUT leader Doug McAvoy—is no way to achieve this. For all Kinnock's bluster there is no sign that Labour intends to either fund education properly or follow a fundamentally different strategy from the Tories.

Teachers, parents and school students must unite in a fight for better pay and resources and against the entrenchment of class privilege in the education system. ■

Bosses target wages

PAY IS an issue again. In the public and private sector unions offers are being rejected and executives are calling or threatening ballots for action.

The Tories are setting 7% or 8% ceilings on public sector pay and urging the private sector to stay in line with this. The electricity supply employers are happy to oblige with an offer of 8.9%. Although two-thirds of deals struck in the first three months of this year are over 9%, the trend for settlements is downwards.

Bosses are feeling the recession and they know that being inside the ERM they cannot rely on the falling value of sterling to allow higher wage awards to be compensated for by cheaper export prices. Unit wage costs are worse than those of their European rivals and profit rates are already pinned to the floor.

While they hope that rising unemployment will temper union members' readiness to fight over pay the private sector bosses are toughening up as compared to 1989-90. Pay cuts, freezes or "pauses" have been pushed through in some of the biggest firms: Michelin, IBM, Philips, Trusthouse Forte and Thomas Cook.

The propaganda offensive is well under way. British Rail's employee relations director justifies a 7% offer on the grounds that it will be above the likely inflation for next year. Samuel Brittan of the *Financial Times* every week urges the unions to set claims on the future expectations not the past record.

What humbug! The workers already extend credit to the bosses by work-

ing a week or a month in hand before they get paid.

They have to pay the prices asked for their food and rent while they are working for the bosses; it is natural and just that the pay—when they finally get it—should compensate the workers for what they have already had to pay out.

The bosses want to rip us off twice. No way! Annual pay settle-

ments are a bad way of catching up as it is.

A real pay policy for the workers would ensure at least monthly compensatory wage rises based on the monthly inflation figure as assessed by committees of workers in and outside the home.

Until we get this we must hold the line—inflation plus and nothing less. ■

THE BRITISH Railways Board (BRB) has grossly insulted 95,000 rail workers with its miserable 7% final pay offer. With this figure below inflation the offer represents a pay cut.

And this is in an industry where the BRB has recently admitted that around 20% of its staff earn less than what the TUC, Low Pay Unit and Council of Europe Decency Threshold define as low pay. So low in fact that 60 to 70 hour working weeks are common in some areas in order to make up decent take home pay.

The Rail, Marine and Transport Union (RMT) have decided to ballot their 60,000 members on strike action (probably 24 hour stoppages), while the 16,000 members of ASLEF are being asked to accept arbitration.

All three rail workers unions are talking about a "substantial increase". But until recently the respective leaderships have steered clear of stating just how substantial such an increase should be.

However RMT secretary Jimmy Knapp has indicated that 8.9% would be the very lowest acceptable increase. But rank and file railworkers need pay rises to bring

them into line with other industrial workers in Britain. In this instance 36.5% would be more realistic than 7%.

In fact 7,800 BR workers in the Signalling and Telecommunications department (S&T, including both RMT and Transport Salaried Staff Association (TSSA) members) have been offered a 25% pay increase, but the "offer" contains more strings than half a dozen philharmonic orchestras! For a start enhanced rates of pay for overtime will largely disappear. Eight out of thirteen Sundays would have to be worked at a pay rate of time and one tenth.

Workers who do accept can expect to be judged by a "Quality Achievement Scheme" which is deliberately designed to divide staff working alongside each other. And "signing up" for this offer is effectively accepting an individual contract. It will undermine collective union organisation.

In short, BR has juggled some figures around and come up with an

offer which, in terms of a real, new money pay increase is negligible. The RMT leadership has spent the last four months faffing around trying to plead with the BRB to "resume negotiations".

But it is clear that since December 1990 the BRB has not been interested in any more negotiations. It has now cynically abrogated the 1956 Negotiating Machinery, employed by itself and the rail unions, by sending out individual letters to S&T workers urging them to "sign up".

Unfortunately TSSA has swallowed the deal, but the majority of RMT members have not. If swift action is not taken demoralisation could set in among workers who have rightly not "signed". This in turn would lead the BRB to force their proposals through, reducing S&T workers' confidence even further.

The S&T "restructuring package" is a test case and if the BRB succeed in forcing it through here they

will inevitably turn their attention to other departments on the railway. The arrogance of the BRB leaves British Rail workers with no alternative but to fight their proposals tooth and nail. If the bosses win this summer they will bring the privatisation of BR, and all that will entail, a step nearer.

● S&T workers—vote against "restructuring" in the coming ballot and fight for all out indefinite strike action!

● Kick out the 7% pay offer—turn all rail union branches and workplaces into rank and file centres of action! Vote for all out action strike action; for unity in action of all rail unions; ASLEF, reject arbitration!

● Build rank and file cross-union links!

● Fight for a pay increase to bring us into line with other industrial workers! For 1% rise for every 1% in inflation.

If the bosses want a summer of discontent, let them have it! ■

British Rail pay fight

IN THE months following Bobby Sands' death in 1981 another nine republican prisoners were to die, all as a result of hunger strikes. They had fought to win prisoner of war status from a British state whose army had, at the time, been at war with them for over 12 years.

It was the 1974-79 Labour government that forced the prisoners down the road that led to their deaths in 1981. After 1976 Labour employed a "criminalisation" policy which ended special category status for Irish political prisoners. Prisoners who had been arrested under special emergency legislation, beaten and tortured in special interrogation centres, framed in no-jury Diplock courts under special rules of evidence, were then to be denied Special Category status, forced to wear ordinary prison clothes, do prison work and submit to prison authorities.

As soon as Special Category status was removed IRA volunteers refused to wear prison clothes and would respond only to the commands and directives of their own superior officers.

The "blanket protests" began when prisoners who refused to wear prison clothes were stripped and given only a blanket for cover. All prisoners "on the blanket" were denied association and recreation, and refused medicinal treatment unless in prison uniform. At fortnightly intervals the prisoners would be given 14 days loss of remission and loss of privilege for "refusal to co-operate".

Escalated

In March 1978 the prison struggle escalated again when, as a result of constant physical beatings while going to the showers, the prisoners refused to leave their cells. In response, the officers began to disrupt slopping-out procedures, kicking pots over and throwing urine and faeces around the cells. Left with no alternative the prisoners began to smear the excrement on the walls.

The cells became maggot infested. Skin and eye infections began to spread, followed by diarrhoea and dysentery. The prisoners had high-powered hoses turned on them in their cells, were dragged out and scrubbed with deck scrubbers, and thrown into baths of scalding hot or freezing cold water. Despite all this, the prisoners refused to bow to the regime.

In response to the struggles within the H-Blocks, the Relatives' Action Committees (RACs) were formed in 1977, based initially in West Belfast. Composed primarily of working class women, the RACs staged pickets of courts, prisons and embassies to publicise the struggle for political status and mobilise the nationalist working class in solidarity.

By the end of 1978 there were RACs all over the Six Counties, and the prisoners' struggle began to rally new layers of support within the nationalist communities. There were 13,000 on the 1978 Bloody Sunday March in Derry, and over 1,000 delegates attended the RAC-organised Coalisland Conference, which called for action on a 32 county basis in support of the prisoners' demands.

But the RACs, whilst drawing in representatives from trade unions and the left, made no demands for workers' action in support of the prisoners, and focused their energies on an endless stream of marches, rallies and publicity stunts.

As the repression within the H-Blocks intensified, the RACs found themselves under pressure, with marches forcibly dispersed by the RUC, and the only real resistance

BOBBY SANDS REMEMBERED

"An unquenchable desire for freedom"

"I believe I am but another of those wretched Irishmen born of a risen generation with a deeply rooted and unquenchable desire for freedom. I am dying not just to attempt to end the barbarity of the H-Block, or to gain the rightful recognition of a political prisoner, but primarily because what is lost in here is

lost for the Republic and those wretched oppressed whom I am deeply proud to know as the 'risen people'."

So wrote Bobby Sands on 1 March 1981 from a cell in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh prison. By 5 May he was dead. Nick Stone commemorates the hunger strikers.



coming from the IRA/INLA military campaign. The number of British army, UDR and RUC forces killed in 1979 was 62—the highest since 1973.

Yet neither the RACs' campaign of street protests and demonstrations, nor the IRA's military offensive forced the British government's hand, and by mid-1979 the prisoners had begun to raise the idea of a hunger strike as the only way forward. It was in this sense a tactic born of the weakness of the movement, an act of desperation.

In October 1979, the RACs' Coordinating Committee launched a 32 county-wide "Smash H-Block" campaign. A committee was elected including members of Sinn Féin, the Irish Republican Socialist Party, People's Democracy and representatives from the RACs. The campaign was based around support for the prisoners' five demands:

1. The right not to wear prison uniform.
2. The right not to do prison work.
3. Freedom of association.
4. The right to organise recreational and education facilities, to have weekly visits, letters and parcels.
5. The right to full remission of sentences.

The campaign was crippled from the start by Sinn Féin's search for a "broad alliance". Gerry Adams announced that, "for those who are unable to support the armed struggle in the North there is nothing in the demands put forward by the committees which cannot be sup-

ported on humanitarian grounds."

But the building of the campaign on a "humanitarian" basis played into the hands of those who wanted to discredit the legitimacy of the anti-imperialist armed struggle. In opposition to any attempt to mobilise rank and file workers in a struggle against the sectarian Northern Ireland state, the campaign relied upon a loose coalition of actors, playwrights, Fianna Fail MPs and reactionary Catholic priests.

Derailed

For most of the British left, the prisoners' struggles up to the Hunger Strikes were never really an issue. Instead the Communist Party of Great Britain and the Socialist Workers Party formed an alliance with the Young Liberals around the Charter 80 campaign. This called for "human rights" not for political status. The British state naturally declined the request to conduct its war against the nationalist people with a little more humanity. Charter 80's refusal to centre the campaign on the need to win workers to oppose British imperialism and give active solidarity to the liberation struggle again and again derailed the possibility of building real support for the prisoners on the mainland.

In the end, the prisoners determined to set their own agenda. On 27 October 1980 Leo Green, Brendan Hughes, Ray McCartney,

Tom McFeeley, Thomas McKearney, Sean McKenna and John Nixon began a hunger strike demanding "political recognition as captured combatants". On 6 November the seven hunger strikers were isolated from the "blanket men" and placed in individual cells.

The hunger strike inspired a tremendous response. On 11 November 400 dock workers in Belfast walked out and marched to the Irish Congress of Trade Union's Northern headquarters to demand action in support of the prisoners. The following day workers all over Derry walked out. On 1 December a National Day of Action was finally called by the National H-Block/Armagh Committee. Thousands of workers throughout the Six Counties defied the ICTU bureaucracy and organised walk outs.

In Dublin, on 6 December over 60,000 demonstrators converged on the British Embassy to clash with riot police. Faced with this pressure, on 18 December, after 52 days of the hunger strike, Humphrey Atkins, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, announced the government's "intention to meet in a practical and humane way the kind of things they have been asking for". What was offered was no more than the relaxation of prison rules, but, with Sean McKenna on the verge of death, and some real concessions apparently won, the hunger strike was called off.

How little the British state had really conceded was brought home

when, on 9 January 1981, Atkins reversed the order that the men in the H-Blocks receive their own clothes.

On 5 January the National H-Block/Armagh Committee began re-mobilising local action groups. A conference was held in Dublin to discuss the new situation. The National Committee's orientation to pressuring SDLP and Fianna Fail was challenged from the floor, but any systematic orientation towards the organised working class, up to and including fighting for a general strike in support of political status, was rejected.

A new hunger strike began on 1 March, on a staggered basis, led off by Bobby Sands and joined by Francis Hughes on 15 March. In Fermanagh/South Tyrone, the Independent MP Frank Maguire died suddenly, and Bobby Sands was put forward as an anti-unionist candidate to run against the Official Unionist, Harry West. Labour Party spokesman Don Concannon said the election offered a "unique opportunity to denounce the men of violence". Sands won the election with 30,492 votes against West's 29,046. Bobby Sands MP continued on hunger strike.

Intransigent

By mid-April, after 45 days without food, Sands was close to death. Widespread street fighting against the British army and RUC broke out as nationalist anger grew. The Thatcher government remained intransigent, and made clear its intention to see Sands die before it gave way. Leading H-Block organisers were arrested and put on seven day detention orders. Labour cheered on the repression.

On 5 May 1981, Bobby Sands died. Over ninety thousand people attended his funeral procession. Within the next week, Francis Hughes, Raymond McCreesh and Patsy O'Hara were also dead. Ten men gave their lives before the Catholic hierarchy pressured the relatives to end the hunger strikes on 3 October 1981.

The deaths of the hunger strikers confirmed the callous indifference of the British state, in both its Labour and Conservative colours, to the interests of the nationalist people. Equally, the level of support for the campaign and the election of Bobby Sands exploded what *The Guardian* called the "myth... that the IRA in its wildest phase represents only a tiny minority of the population".

The courageous sacrifice of class fighters, like Bobby Sands, provided a terrible confirmation of the need for the independent mobilisation of the anti-Unionist working class against British imperialism in pursuit of its own class interests. Sadly this mobilisation had been lacking in the campaign. Ultimately, the anger of masses of workers was dissipated by bourgeois nationalists, liberals and churchmen, who allowed the British state to let the hunger strikers die and ride out the storm of protests.

Ten years on we salute the heroism of the hunger strikers, we pay tribute to their bravery in making the ultimate sacrifice in the cause of justice and we recall the words of the republican POWs in their appeal to English workers:

"We turn to our ally, the working class in England, who do have the political power to force the Tories to stop their torture of political prisoners. This common resistance to the criminalisation of the national liberation struggle in Ireland will greatly increase the unity of the working class in our opposition to imperialism."

Today we commit ourselves to continuing the struggle to forge that unity. ■

Paul Morris reviews
Revolutionary History
"Trotskyism and Stalinism in
Greece"
Vol3 No3 Spring 1991

Trotskyism and the Greek resistance

THE LATEST issue of *Revolutionary History* is mainly devoted to translations of the work of Loukas Karliftis, a veteran Greek Trotskyist and leader of the Greek centrist group, Workers Vanguard.

Centred on the development of Greek Trotskyism before during and after the Second World War the journal provides valuable new material on the Trotskyist struggle against Stalinism. It contains a graphic first hand account of the heroic struggle waged by the Greek Trotskyists and individual Stalinist and centrist militants, during successive waves of domestic dictatorship and foreign occupation.

During these years thousands of Communists and Trotskyists were tortured and forced to publicly renounce their views. The few hundred who withstood the test were herded into concentration camps to be slaughtered during the fascist occupation.

But Karliftis' account is more than a tribute. It is also a revealing—if unapologetic—reminder of the sectarian legacy which this period of repression bequeathed the surviving Trotskyists.

Popular front

The story begins in 1934. Along with the rest of Stalin's Comintern the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) embraced the strategic cross-class alliance known as the popular front. In Greece the Stalinist leaders based their arguments for the popular front on the fact that the country was "semi-feudal". Greece had to go through a capitalist stage of development, and for this the working class would have to be the subordinate ally of the liberal bourgeoisie; the preconditions for socialist revolution had not ripened in Greece, they argued.

The Trotskyist leader, ex-KKE Secretary and Greek translator of Marx's *Capital*, Pantelis Pouliopoulos, replied with a devastating critique. He proved that Greece had in fact become a capitalist country. The Popular Front, he argued, would lead to disaster.

Events proved him right. The KKE demobilised the masses in its pursuit of an "anti-fascist" coalition with the bosses and parts of the military. But it failed to prevent the Metaxas dictatorship, which came to power in 1936, crushing the workers' movement and intensifying the repression of the KKE and the Trotskyists.

Over the next years the KKE became more divided and discredited as Stalin made his pact with Hitler. The KKE was thrown into further confusion by the subsequent invasion of Greece by fascist Italy. The party's fortunes were restored mainly by its ability to pose as the "saviour" of Greece after Germany occupied the country. The KKE organised the popular frontist resistance movement—EAM—and became the major force in the movement's guerilla army, ELAS.

In the beginning ELAS was organised "from below" by local KKE leaders amongst the peasants in the mountains. Increasingly it attracted young workers who had fled repression in the cities. But it rapidly became tied to the strategy of the Greek Stalinist leaders, which was itself an extension of Moscow foreign policy.

Accordingly, Greece was to be "liberated" by the allies and remain part of the capitalist west as a "bourgeois democratic" country; the activities of ELAS were to be sub-



A young ELAS member with General Zervas

ordinated to the military goals of the allies.

The KKE summoned up the workers and peasants to fight the German occupiers with the most rancid nationalist slogans. Nowhere in the zones they liberated did they attempt to overturn capitalism. Throughout the war the leaders fought to use the guerilla struggle merely as a bargaining counter in negotiations with the bourgeois, monarchist "government in exile" in Cairo.

Nevertheless, two factors tended to undermine the Stalinist leaders' project: first the mass character of the resistance movement and its support. The KKE *kapetanos* who led the local guerilla groups were to prove a constant source of opposition to the leadership under the pressure of their mass base. Sec-

ondly, the allies and the Cairo government continually imposed conditions on the KKE which it could not accept.

Despite this the KKE signed agreements with the liberals, the monarchists and the allies at Lebanon, Caserta and Varkiza which promised that the KKE/ELAS would oversee a peaceful transition to an allied occupation and a bourgeois "National Unity" government. This would protect the vast majority of Nazi collaborators. It would include many right wing figures, but not the KKE which had led the fight against occupation.

As a result the working class masses were left leaderless during the revolutionary situation which followed the collapse of German

occupation. In Italy and France the Stalinist leaderships were able to peacefully deliver the armed resistance movements into the hands of the allies with little opposition. As a reward they were given temporary places in the post-war government coalitions. In Greece events took a different turn. Stalinist attempts at peaceful demonstrations to influence the new government were met with murderous repression by the British army in December 1944.

During this crisis the Trotskyists were marginalised. They had correctly attacked the pro-imperialist aims of the resistance. They attacked its methods, which saw the working class only as a "reserve" for the guerillas. They attacked its strategy of a delivering power to the anti-German bosses cowering

and therefore the war against it was not a just war. It flowed from all of this that there was no possibility of a tactical orientation to it.

Even if we leave aside the debate as to whether or not Greece is (or was then) an imperialist power) Karliftis was wrong. Whilst temporary occupation does not create a national question German imperialism's occupation was not a simple military incursion. It was part of Hitler's chosen method of providing Germany with a colonial empire: the subordination and occupation of the Balkans and the Soviet Union.

Under these conditions it was inevitable that the mass of Greeks would, justifiably, feel themselves to be suffering from foreign domination, from national oppression. This explains why the masses flocked to the banner of EAM/ELAS, as they did to the resistance movements in imperialist France and Italy. They had illusions in the restoration of bourgeois democracy and in the reformist promises of the Stalinist leaders.

It was thus necessary for Trotskyists to participate in the resistance movement in Greece, something the Fourth International (FI) recognised in its 1944 "Theses on the Liquidation of World War Two and the Revolutionary Upsurge".

Karliftis' main document is full of quotations from these theses which rightly characterised the European guerilla movements as chauvinist, as disarmers of the working class, as objectively counter-revolutionary and so on. But in a blatant piece of selective quotation Karliftis ignores the main thrust of the 1944 theses which was to change the FI's orientation to the resistance movements.

The FI argued that the entry of armed masses into the resistance opened up a tendency for them to act in their own class interests and thus collide with the pre-arranged plans of the imperialists and Stalinists:

"In mobilising an important section of active forces of the working class and petit bourgeois youth it poses the burning question: will this youth further the revolution or the most reactionary forces of imperialism?"

"In the coming revolutionary developments, in the developing chaos, these small armies, directed at strategic points, can play an important role for or against the working class and the revolution"

These prophetic words were written months before the battle of Athens. When the crunch came with the British occupation KKE leader Ioannides limped from his hospital bed to head off an insurrection. The *kapetanos* were preparing to disarm all British units and to seize Athens—not in order to overthrow capitalism but to secure participation in the "democratic" government which was to be installed. Ioannides countermanded this, demobilising the offensive and leaving the guerilla

troops outside Athens. Two days later the British army began its massacre of the Athens working class leaving the KKE leaders in complete disarray.

This did not stop the Greek Trotskyists becoming the object of vicious Stalinist and imperialist repression after December. But the Karliftis group did itself no favours by abstaining from the guerilla struggle and failing to see the decisive potential of armed masses to break from their Stalinist misleadership.

Intervention

If an intervention was principled then it was also a possibility. Michel Pablo—a Greek Trotskyist in exile—supported such a tactic despite the fact that a revolutionary intervention into the ELAS resistance would certainly have been a difficult and dangerous undertaking.

But the events surrounding the battle of Athens caused a severe rupture between the Stalinist leaders and their local guerilla commanders. As Karliftis himself points out, the legendary and most left wing of the *kapetanos*, Aris Velouchiotis was regarded with constant suspicion by the Stalinists. After the battle of Athens he was expelled from the KKE and murdered in June 1945, with the connivance of the KKE leaders.

According to Karliftis Velouchiotis represented "the faction of Reiss", Trotsky's term for the internationalist minority within the Stalinist bureaucracy symbolised by Ignace Reiss. It is not certain whether Aris had broken from Stalinism but it is certain that the sectarian inflexibility shown by Karliftis' group contributed to their inability to make an Ignace Reiss out of *kapetanos* like Velouchiotis; that is, to win him into the camp of the Fourth International.

Heroism

None of this detracts from the heroism of the struggles recorded in Karliftis' account. The most vivid example being the story of Pouliopoulos addressing his Italian firing squad in their own language:

"In killing us you are killing yourselves—you are fighting against the idea of the socialist revolution"

"There was dead silence after his speech. If one soldier threw down his gun all would do so. The order to fire was given but nobody raised his gun. They were too overcome. The fascist at their head took out his pistol and shot Pouliopoulos dead. So a huge tree was felled."

That is the internationalist spirit which Stalinism and imperialism combined to kill at the end of the war in every country where it threatened their rule. Karliftis' account—laced with political errors as it is—still illuminates the unshakeable revolutionary commitment of the Trotskyist movement of the 1930s and 40s. ■

Karliftis' account is more than a tribute. It is also a revealing—if unapologetic—reminder of the sectarian legacy which this period of repression bequeathed the surviving Trotskyists

Revolutionary History AGM
3.00pm Saturday May 11
Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London
"South Africa and Trotskyism"
Speaker: Baruch Hirson

This resolution was passed by the International Secretariat of the LRCI before Saddam Hussein offered "autonomy" to the Iraqi Kurdish Front. Its warnings about the dangers posed to the Kurdish struggle by the bourgeois nationalist leaders have been fully vindicated. Another betrayal is on the horizon. The resolution is a timely contribution to the debates taking place in the Kurdish liberation movement. We reprint it here, in full, and invite the Kurdish left to comment on it.

1.

The civil war and the mass insurrection in Iraq has been drowned in blood by Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard. With the savagery always shown by defeated armies against their own people, the Iraqi Republican Guards have wreaked a bloody vengeance on the population. The magnitude of the rout and decimation of Saddam's armies during their attempted withdrawal from Kuwait fuelled the outbreak of a short but bloody civil war in Iraq. The conditions imposed on the defeated Ba'athist regime, the continued sanctions and the demand for massive reparations, will ensure that there is little prospect of any long lasting stability in Iraq, however much the imperialists desire it. Their own methods are at war with this objective.

The cease-fire, embodied in United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution No 687 and accepted by Hussein, is a studied and deliberate humiliation for Iraq. It demands that the Iraqis destroy all their offensive weapons and pay huge reparations to Kuwait and the other "injured" petro-monarchies despite having suffered the worst devastation caused by mass bombing since the Vietnam War. The UN is to inspect and remove all Iraq's nuclear fuel, its facilities for chemical and biological weapons production etc.

Earlier threats to try Saddam for war crimes before a Nuremberg-style tribunal have not, as yet, materialised. But all these punishments are tied to developments inside Iraq. They will be enforced or relaxed to the extent that the regime in Baghdad acts according to the bidding of the White House. US troops still occupy more than 15% of Iraqi territory and have even made further incursions and shot down Iraqi aircraft since the first temporary cease-fire. They could do so again if Baghdad fails to dance to the American tune

2.

The US had originally hoped to bring about Saddam's overthrow by encouraging a *coup d'état* from within the military elite. Before the ground fighting started Bush called Saddam "worse than Hitler" and went so far as to call on the Iraqi people to "rise up against the dictator". However, this was the last thing Bush wanted once military victory was his. What the US Administration sought was the swift installation of a regime that would maintain strict order at home but do imperialism's bidding in the region as a whole. Against their wishes, the defeat of the regime produced a mass uprising in northern and southern Iraq in which tens of thousands died. Faced with this uprising the USA, which had proclaimed its central war aim to be the rescue of the Kuwaiti people, refused to aid the Kurds or the Iraqi rebels in the south.

The reasons for this are straightforward enough. The USA fears any revolution like sin. It mistrusts and hates all the popular forces who might replace the military dictatorship far more than it fears Saddam himself. In addition to this the USA is totally committed to the borders of the existing states of the region. It will oppose any changes, no matter how much these may accord with the desires of the peoples concerned.

3.

The surrounding Arab states are at one with this US policy. They supported Hussein against Khomeini and still support him against the Shi'ite fundamentalist opposition. The Syrian Ba'athists would merely like to replace the rule of Saddam's Takriti clique with that of a Ba'athist faction closer to themselves. The Iranians, or factions within the Iranian regime, did give

some support to the Shi'ite-led rebels. But improving relations with imperialism is a far higher priority for Rafsanjani than aiding his co-religionists in southern Iraq. His government is urgently seeking credits and investment for Iran's post-war reconstruction and readmittance into the "world community". In addition, the Iranian mullahs have no interest in aiding the Iraqi Kurdish struggle to victory against Baghdad, lest this encourage the Iranian Kurds to renew a similar mass revolt against Tehran.

All these developments show that despite, and even because of, the US military victory, the region remains a powder keg of contradictions that will create new wars, national uprisings and revolutions. A partition of Iraq, or the attempt to create a new state of Kurdistan, runs the danger of creating a far worse outcome for the USA than Saddam's survival would. The USA would prefer his survival, crippled and humiliated, to the partition of the country or the replacement of the Ba'athists by a pro-Iranian Shi'ite regime. In the midst of their celebrations at having "kicked the Vietnam syndrome" they suddenly face the spectre of a new Lebanon, whose chaos could infect and destabilise the whole Middle East. Thus, all the appeals from the leaders of the anti-Saddam opposition fell on deaf ears.

4.

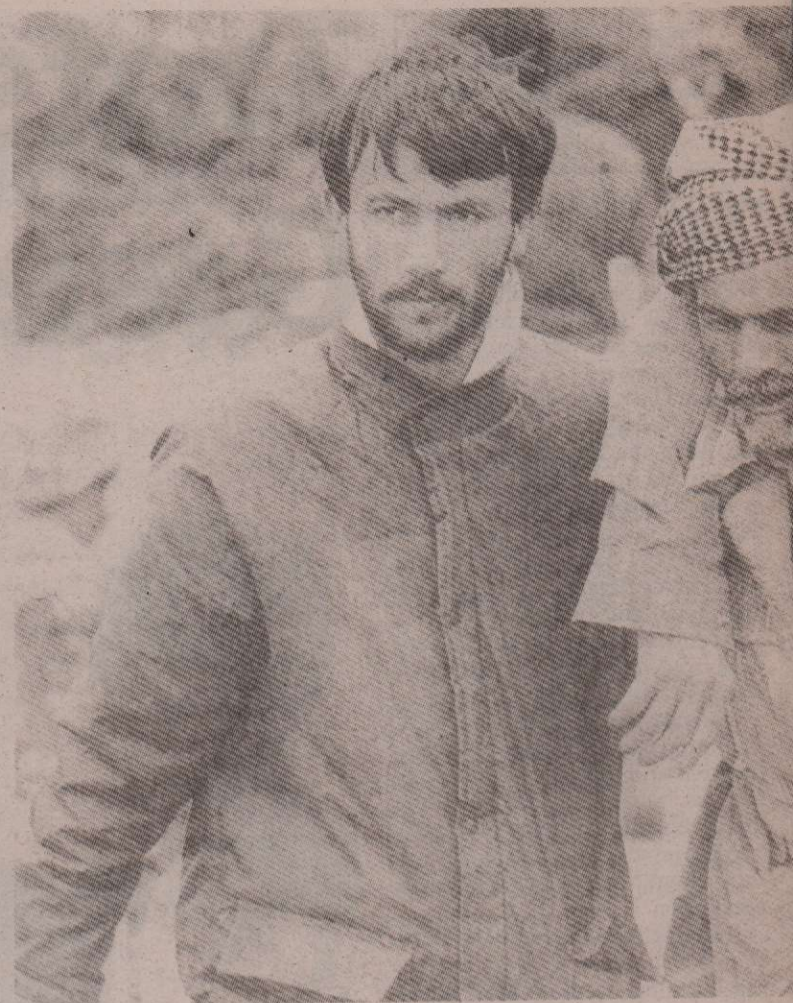
Immediately after the provisional cease-fire the imperialists, who had previously attacked the Ba'athist regime as Nazi, covertly supported it against the rebels. The British imperialist mouthpiece, *The Economist* of 16.3.91, confessed as much:

"Whom then should the allies support? They might stick with the devil they know, especially now that his horns and tail have been lopped. The successor most acceptable to Iraq's Arab neighbours would probably be a Sunni Muslim, no doubt a soldier, who would run a strong government without Mr Hussein's ambitions against his neighbours and, preferably, without his domestic brutality too."

Thus the US army allowed the Republican Guards through their lines to crush the rebellion of the Shi'ites in the south. The Republican Guards, having created a bloodbath in Basra and the cities of the south, moved north to carry out similar atrocities. Their onslaught led to the mass expulsion of the Kurdish population from Iraqi Kurdistan. The tragedy that befell the entire Kurdish people dwarfed the horrors of March 1980 and August 1988 (Halabja), when poison gas led to thousands of deaths and hundreds of thousands of refugees crossing the Turkish border.

5.

Today over a million starving Kurds are huddled in desperation on the border of Iran, over a million are kept in freezing mountain conditions on the Iraq/Turkey border. All are without adequate food or



The Iraqi and the the

shelter. Thousands have already died of cold or hunger. Having stood idly by whilst Saddam crushed the uprisings, Bush, Major and Mitterrand are now fulsomely expressing their "concern" for the plight of the Kurds, but only so they can continue to pursue their own ends. Whilst the world outcry against the impending genocide of the Kurds exerted some pressure on the imperialists to change their policy towards a new intervention in Iraq it does not signify a conversion to disinterested humanitarianism on their part.

The setting up of "protected enclaves", refugee camps, for the Kurds above the 36th parallel in Iraq, guarded by British, US and French troops has little to do with "concern" for the plight of the Kurdish civilians and nothing to do with support for their struggles against the Ba'athists. The USA has already declared that the *peshmergas* will not be allowed to operate from this military exclusion zone. Indeed they intend to restrict and contain the Kurdish struggle against Saddam whilst using it as one more pressure point to construct a regime in Baghdad more to their liking. Having done this they will cynically abandon the Kurds to the mercy of some new dictator in Baghdad.

6.

For these reasons it would be shortsighted for the Kurds, despite their

desperate plight, to welcome the British marines and US troops. They have only to look at the misery of the Palestinians in the UN Gaza Strip camps to see what the future could hold if they relied on the imperialists or the UN for "protection". The Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) of Turkey Kurdistan were correct to denounce the intervention of the imperialist troops. The current negotiations between the leaders of the Kurdistan Front and Baghdad are following a well worn but dangerous path. The Kurdish leaders appear to be abandoning the joint struggle of all the oppressed peoples and workers of Iraq against the Ba'athist dictatorship and are seeking a deal with Saddam for a return to the 1970 agreement which allowed for an autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan. But such a deal would only be guaranteed, if at all, by the imperialist/UN presence and would give no long term guarantees to the Kurds of Iraq. It would place the Iraqi Kurds under the aegis of imperialism, an utterly unreliable and treacherous ally. It would leave in power in Baghdad a regime capable of tearing up the autonomy agreement and reimposing its dictatorship at the first opportunity.

7.

Revolutionary communists and, indeed workers world-wide, should have supported the Iraqi mass uprising and should support continued



Peshmergas prepare to fight Ba'athist forces



civil war plight of Kurds

go to their Kremlin mentors who dictated the ICP's subservience to the Ba'athists. The Soviet bureaucrats virtually ignored the crushing of the ICP and continued to support Saddam Hussein during his reactionary war against Iran. Why? Because Iraq was key to Soviet military and foreign policy interests in the region, to which all democratic or class principles could be cynically sacrificed.

9.

The Kurds, a people of between 20 and 25 million, are the largest nationality in the world lacking a state. The same cynical imperialists that proclaimed the sacred national rights of six hundred thousand or so Kuwaitis (of whom only 10% were eligible to vote) now wash their hands of the large and long established Kurdish people who have been struggling against their oppression for generations. We unconditionally support the right of the Kurds to self-determination up to and including secession and the creation of an independent Kurdish state if they so wish. The imperialists deny them this elementary democratic right because they do not wish to disrupt the rule of their agents and allies inside Turkey, Syria, Iran and the USSR.

The Kurdish people once again face a catastrophe, but to turn to the imperialists, whether US, British or French, is to turn to their worst enemy. Every time the Kurdish leaders placed their trust in one or other imperialist power, or one of imperialism's Muslim puppets in the region, it betrayed them. For all these powers the strategic objective is a stable "peace" favourable to them. They fear like the plague the creation of any independent Kurdish republic because this would de-stabilise all the neighbouring states.

10.

The international working class movement and its conscious vanguard must condemn the hypocritical "democratic imperialists" who rule out national unity and independence for the Kurdish people in the name of the sanctity of borders and existing states. Equally, the majority of the leaders of the Kurds, who proclaim that they only seek autonomy, must be treated with the greatest suspicion. In essence the leaders of the Kurdistan Front seek to preserve their own tribal, landlord and merchant particularism and local power. In seeking the support of imperialism and the bourgeois regimes of the surrounding states these leaders also connive in the oppression of those Kurds outside their own control and patronage.

The Kurds have no consistent or sincere allies among the imperialists or amongst their semi-colonial client regimes. Their genuine allies are to be found throughout the Middle East in the proletarian and poor peasant forces, to whom they should turn their face for material and political aid in this, their hour of need.

11.

Revolutionary socialists fight for the right of Kurdish self-determination up to an including the right to secede and form an independent state, even in one part of Kurdistan.

The Kurdish masses, the peasants and the working class can only escape national oppression and express their will on which sort of

state they desire if the dictatorships of the surrounding states are smashed. Thus the national struggle of the Kurds has to be linked to the struggles of the Iraqi, Turkish, Syrian and Iranian workers and poor peasant just as much as the non-Kurdish workers of the oppressor states have to support the struggle of the Kurds. Only along this path will the Kurds find their liberation.

But the final goal at the end of this path is not yet decided. If the Kurdish masses' national aspirations are satisfied by the gaining of real equality in social and political rights within each of the oppressor states then we must support this. Should self-determination lead them to seek an autonomous region then likewise we must help them to achieve this outcome.

But the experience of the last two decades of autonomy within Iraq, the thwarted attempts at achieving it in Iraq, Syria and Turkey, together with the recognition that not even autonomy could have saved them from the recent genocidal actions of Hussein, may lead the Kurdish masses to rally round the demand for a united independent Kurdistan.

In this situation we would put to the fore the slogan a workers' and peasants' republic of Kurdistan based on elected and recallable councils and an armed popular militia. Such a republic could only attain a stable existence as part of a Socialist United States of the Middle East that would end imperialist exploitation and all oppression based on nation, class and gender.

12.

To resolve the acute crisis of leadership that affects the workers' movement in Iraq and all the parts of Kurdistan, it is necessary to build a revolutionary workers' party, a Leninist-Trotskyist party, that will counterpose its strategy to the popular frontism and stageism of the ICP, the PKK and Komala (a Kurdish guerilla group based in Iran). It will strive to break the hold on the masses of fundamentalists, bourgeois nationalists and military demagogues alike. Whilst distinct parties may be necessary to work in Kurdistan and the rest of Iraq, it will be obligatory for them to work in the closest co-ordination to overcome the divisions within the popular masses engendered by national oppression, religion, and bourgeois nationalism. In short, only a party that is internationalist in deeds, as well as in words, can lead the Kurdish and Iraqi revolution to victory. The burning tasks facing such a party today are:

- Down with the bloody Ba'athist military dictatorship! For the dissolution of the Republican Guard and the smashing of the secret police! For soldiers' committees in the army and the election of all officers! For an armed workers' and peasants' militia!

- Victory to the Kurdish national liberation struggle! All imperialist, Iraqi, Turkish and Iranian troops out of the Kurdish areas! For immediate international solidarity with the struggle against Saddam Hussein! For volunteers and heavy military equipment for the Kurdish resistance and under its sole control. The world's working class movements must fight for food, shelter and medical supplies to be supplied to the Kurds and to the Iraqi workers as a whole without conditions. No to Bush's camps! Open the borders of Turkey and Iran and the imperialist countries to Kurdish refugees! In the camps

the supplies of food and medicine should be placed under the control of elected camp committees.

- The Kurdish and Iraqi resistance have the right to request, and receive, aid and assistance, both medical and military, from any source, but they should not in their own interest, call for, or support, the intervention of imperialist forces or those of its Turkish gendarmes. They can never aid the Kurds' struggle for freedom.

- Despite Saddam's atrocities, workers world-wide must oppose all imperialist sanctions against Iraq or any "Nuremburg Tribunal" against Saddam backed by the UN, the Arab League or the USA. Only the workers of the Middle East have the right to try Saddam. He should not be judged by the imperialists for the "crime" of daring to challenge them, but for the torture, murder and repression of the Iraqi and Kurdish workers and peasants. Only a workers' and popular tribunal has the right to do this. But it should also bring to judgement the kings and emirs and the greatest war criminals, the imperialist war leaders, headed by Bush himself.

- Down with the popular front Joint Action Committee! Its only role was to reassure imperialism that its interests would not be threatened by a new coalition government. The only joint action necessary was, and is, the struggle to smash the Ba'athist military dictatorship. In this fight, the organisations of the workers and poor peasants must establish, and preserve, the full political independence of their parties, unions and other organisations. No reliance on, or acceptance of, bourgeois or clerical leadership! No support for a bourgeois provisional government! The Iraqi Communist Party, the unions and all self-proclaimed socialist and anti-imperialist parties based on the workers and rural poor, should take up the fight to create workers' and peasants' councils and militias and a government based on them.

- Should war between Iraq and imperialism break out, with a fresh attempt by the latter to impose a client regime in Baghdad, then we would once more be for the victory of the Iraqi army. However, in isolated clashes between an Iraqi army attempting to harass the Kurds and an imperialist force defending them, we take no sides. In the event of a full scale armed conflict breaking out once more between imperialism and the Iraqi regime we call on the Kurdish fighters to put to the fore the expulsion of the imperialist troops as a necessary pre-condition of their struggles for self-determination. However, in no way should this mean the surrendering of their independence as a fighting force able to take up their struggle for their national rights and for a democratic and socialist Iraq.

- No to an Islamic republic! No to a new Ba'athist military dictator! No to a pro-US bourgeois democracy! Summon a constituent assembly, elected by the entire resident population of Iraq over sixteen years of age! Construct workers' and peasants' councils and militia! All power to councils of the workers and peasants!

- Self-determination for all the nationalities in Iraq: Kurds, Turkomans, Assyrians, etc, up to and including secession if they so wish!

- Cancel the external debt! Nationalisation, without compensation and under workers' control, of all the monopolies and imperialist companies operating in Iraq!

- US and allied troops hands off Iraq! All imperialist troops off Iraqi soil and out of the Gulf!

resistance against Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, despite the pro-imperialist leadership of these uprisings. Just as all genuine revolutionaries supported Iraq in its military conflict with the USA and its allies, despite the reactionary leadership of Saddam Hussein, so now they must support the present struggle because its proclaimed objectives, democracy for Iraq and autonomy for the Kurds, which are the genuine aspirations of the masses involved, are progressive ones. However, this should not blind us to the reactionary character of the present leadership of these struggles.

The main Iraqi opposition parties have created in Syria a "Joint Action Committee". In this reactionary rotten bloc there co-exist Sunni and Shi'ite religious parties, pro-Iranian fundamentalists (like Dawah and Majlis), Kurdish bourgeois nationalists (like the Kurdish Democratic Party—KDP, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan—PUK), liberals, ex-monarchists, Stalinists and Ba'athist dissidents. All of these forces have a record of sell-outs and betrayals, of assassinations, torture or massacres of one another. All have collaborated with the Ba'athists in different circumstances. Some of these forces are backed by the Saudi reactionaries. All of them courted the favour of the imperialists throughout the crisis and the war.

One of the fundamentalist leaders (Sheik Mujaher of the Assembly of the Iraqi Ulema) said, "of course we reject the presence of American

troops on our soil as a principle. But if the American troops went to Basra now the people will welcome this". (*The Independent*, London, 14.3.91) Jalel Talabani, leader of the "socialist" PUK, travelled to Washington to seek the aid of the Bush administration, but officials there refused to meet this would-be servant of US imperialism. Iraqi Kurdish delegations travelled to Ankara to plead for help from Turgut Ozal. They got a meeting but straight after it Ozal mobilised his troops against them and is now preventing Kurdish refugees from crossing the Turkish border.

8.

Kurdish and Iraqi workers should place no reliance whatsoever on these reactionary bourgeois forces. But the traditional party of the working class, the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), has a shameful record of betrayal, not only of the interests of the proletariat, but also of the democratic rights of the Kurds and other minorities. The ICP was part of the Ba'athist-dominated regime that brutally crushed the Kurdish rebellion in 1975. Saddam Hussein used the Stalinists as a left cover for his massacres and then turned on them, executing a number of the party's most prominent leaders and driving its cadres into exile or underground.

But the Iraqi Stalinist leaders were not the only, or the biggest, criminals. The prize for this must

WP: What were the origins of the Kurdistan Communist Movement (KCM)?

KCM: The KCM emerged from a split in a nationalist and Stalinist organisation called "The Struggle" in 1984. The comrades who split from "The Struggle" were the leadership of that group. We began to criticise our own nationalistic and Stalinist tendencies in the past. We broke away from these tendencies step by step. Up to 1983 the group led the guerrilla warfare against the military dictatorship.

WP: What were the main issues and pressures that made you look at your past nationalist and Stalinist positions?

KCM: The starting point was that because we were leading the guerrilla warfare we were defending a wrong strategy, a strategy which was quite similar to the Vietnamese and Chinese Communist Parties' strategies at the time of their revolutions. This was the strategy of the prolonged people's war. After three years of guerrilla warfare we became aware of the problems with this strategy.

From the very beginning when "The Struggle" was established we were saying that the central task of communists in Kurdistan was to build a working class party, but we realised we were a movement drawing cadres and supporters from the peasants. A working class party can only be built if you are working amongst the working class movement in the cities and factories but in practice what we were doing was quite opposed to that slogan.

And then we discussed the united front policy with the Kurdish bourgeoisie. In the past we were saying that the working class should be in a front, a national democratic front, with the bourgeoisie. We were defending a two stage revolution.

Then after 1984, we came to the conclusion that we should not call for the working class to ally itself, strategically or permanently, with its own bourgeoisie in Kurdistan. In the interests of the working class struggle and socialism the main tactic must be for the Kurdish workers to ally themselves with the Turkish working class, with the world working class, the Arab working class and the Iranian working class. The Kurdish workers must be part of the world struggle for socialism.

WP: What was your attitude to permanent revolution, which is one of the cornerstones of Trotskyism against the stages theory and the permanent bloc with the national bourgeoisie?

KCM: When we discussed this question we said: when a revolution takes place if the bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie are the leadership it is quite clear that the revolution might cease and there might emerge the need for another civil war, another revolution. In order to prevent this happening the working class must lead the democratic revolution, the national struggle must be led by the working class.

And if it is led by the working class the question is, what should that revolution do about the factories, the mines, capitalist industry? Is it going to develop capitalism or is it going to demolish capitalism, as it must do feudalism, semi-feudalism and other pre-capitalist modes of production?

Kurdistan is an occupied country, a sort of colony, but capitalism and a working class clearly exist in that country. There are big factories, and the Turkish monopolies dominate in industry and in the agrarian sector.

This raises the question: what must you do with regard to these

Workers Power interviewed a comrade from the Kurdistan Communist Movement, an organisation formally established in January 1990. In this shortened version of the interview the discussion centres on the crucial questions of strategy and tactics that confront communists in Kurdistan.



KURDISTAN

What strategy for communists?



monopolies? Are you just going to give them to the capitalists, to the national bourgeoisie? That would mean that you would develop capitalism and become part of the imperialist capitalist system. It would mean that capitalist slavery would continue, and you can't just leave it that way if you are socialist.

These questions forced us to discuss whether socialism is possible within a single country. One question brought another one. This brought us to the conclusion that permanent revolution is the true strategy for the Kurdish working class. Not only the Kurdish, but the world working class. But it is especially true in the Kurdistan context, because it is a tactic, or you might call it strategy, for countries that haven't yet achieved the bourgeois revolution.

First it was put forward by Marx and Engels themselves in 1850, in the "Declaration of the Communist League". This explains what permanent revolution is. But although Marx and Engels developed permanent revolution and the transitional programme they didn't defend the idea of working class leadership of bourgeois revolutions. Lenin in the Russian context first formulated the question of working class leadership.

What Trotsky did was bring all of the elements together under the name of permanent revolution. This is why when it is said to us that we should call ourselves Trotskyists I am not convinced of that. We must take the development of Marxist theory as a whole, its history as a whole. When you concentrate on the whole it is not necessary to call yourselves Trotskyist.

WP: Starting with the idea that

permanent revolution is necessary for Kurdistan, does it mean that you have a different attitude towards bourgeois nationalist forces, like the KDP and PUK and what you characterise as petit bourgeois nationalists, like the PKK and Komala in Iranian Kurdistan? How do you assess these forces and what tactics do you think are necessary towards them?

KCM: Firstly let me identify the three main forces in Kurdistan, not just Turkish Kurdistan, but Kurdistan as a whole. There is a nationalist bourgeois section represented by, in the Iraqi context, the PUK—because the KDP in Iraq is mostly an aristocratic party based on the landlords in the countryside—and in Iranian Kurdistan by the KDP.

In Turkish Kurdistan a legal party was established a few years ago, called the People's Labour Party, which is a Kurdish party. As soon as it was established we said the Kurdish nationalist bourgeoisie has organised itself into a party. There is also the Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan, which is actually a representative of the nationalist bourgeois section of Turkish Kurdistan.

These parties are based in the cities and represent the Kurdish nationalist bourgeoisie. There is another section of the bourgeoisie which is collaborationist, in Iraq with the Iraqi regime, in Turkey with the Turkish regime, and the same in Iran.

In Iran the KDP is a party which represents the nationalist bourgeoisie. Komala is a petit bourgeois organisation. It doesn't have an independent party or organisation.

It is a part of the PUK. The PKK is a petit bourgeois organisation representative of the petit bourgeois class in Turkish Kurdistan, based on small cities and towns, and the petit bourgeois peasant section, the small peasants and small landholders.

The Kurdistan Communist Movement, although it is based in Turkish Kurdistan at the moment, in the context of the whole of Kurdistan is the first Marxist movement in the history of the country. For the first time a Marxist party is being built and a Marxist programme is being put forward.

This is an alternative to the nationalist programme, whether bourgeois or petit bourgeois, which is for a capitalist Kurdistan. A force is now fighting for a united proletarian dictatorship in Kurdistan, in Turkey, Iraq, Iran etc, fighting for workers' revolution, for workers' power in Kurdistan.

Our strategy is quite different to that of the nationalists. In our tactics we support, as a principle, the fighters against imperialism and against those states that shared Kurdistan amongst themselves. They together, as a coalition, have smashed Kurdish uprisings throughout this century.

WP: What do you think the immediate slogans are for the Kurds to deal with the current refugee crisis and the slaughter of Kurds?

KCM: Kurdish people are being treated as refugees in their own country! It is their own country, divided by the borders imposed on them by other countries. They are on the "borders" in their own country, being treated as strangers, as foreigners. This contradiction

must be resolved. National self-determination is the key. Immediately we must concentrate on this political solution. National self-determination must be won. This means the Kurdish people must have the right to unite in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran and the USSR. It must mean the right to independence.

We must defend this principle. Our programme on the national question begins with the principle of self-determination. This doesn't mean an invitation to secession. We do not call for secession without regard to proletarian interests, without regard to conditions. This is what makes us different from nationalists, and makes our programme different from the nationalist programme.

The petit bourgeois nationalists' specific demand is for independence. It is a permanent demand for them, or it seems to be. However, they are ready to give it up when imperialism or regional governments offer to recognise them. The PKK made this quite clear in an interview with a Turkish daily newspaper. Their leader, comrade Apo, said in the interview that the PKK won't demand land from Turkey if the PKK is given the right to organise legally, the right to struggle in the legal arena.

WP: Do you think that in order to get victory, given the different problems faced in different areas of the country under the rule of different regimes, you need to raise now the slogan of a united socialist Kurdistan? Would that be one of your slogans for today or do you think the division of Kurdistan poses problems with that slogan?

KCM: In the past our slogan was for an independent united democratic and socialist Kurdistan. Now we don't have such a slogan. Today our main slogan for the national struggle is for the right to national self-determination. It is the working class demand. But as Lenin said this was not an invitation to separation under all circumstances.

We defend self-determination in order to achieve working class unity. It must be defended in oppressor countries by putting the emphasis on the right to secession. In the oppressed countries it must mean putting the emphasis on the right to unite. A socialist Kurdistan might be autonomous, it might be part of a federation of Kurdistan, it might be an independent Kurdistan. It will depend on the balance of forces and the concrete situation.

We are fighting in our programme for a Soviet Kurdistan. This doesn't clarify whether it will be independent, federated etc. This will be a question for the future. Now the Kurdish people do not have the right to choose. They must be given that right.

WP: What do you think the main tasks of KCM are now, in the current situation?

KCM: Our main task in Kurdistan is to strengthen our small base amongst the working class in Turkish Kurdistan. We are working in the working class movement and we are fighting for a working class party in all of Kurdistan. A party must be built to lead the national liberation movement and make the revolution permanent.

But also a common task is to fight for an International, to discuss with socialists from all other countries. We must fight for an International, for a world leadership. The leadership question is an important, an urgent, burning question.

The bourgeoisie have their International, the UN. They have their armies. We need our International with our own armies. We are fighting for these two aims. ■

Dictators in waiting

THE DEFENCE of the sovereignty of the nation and state, strengthening its external and internal security, is the key goal of the Council's operation. We must take into account not only external threats. The state can be threatened by attempts at coups, terrorism . . . The economic crisis causes tension inside the country. We must be on the alert and prepare for all threats in advance."

So declared Poland's President Lech Walesa in mid-February at the first meeting of the National Security Council. This body is answerable to him rather than to the parliament (Sejm). It is a perfect illustration of the danger lodged in the political situation in all the East European countries that have set out on the road back to capitalism. It is a classic example of what Marxists call Bonapartism.

Destiny

In late 1989 the mass of people in Eastern Europe took their destiny into their hands and threw off the hated Stalinist dictatorships. Failing to find a revolutionary leadership the workers only succeeded in installing pro-capitalist regimes. But along the way they did win a whole range of political and trade union rights, as well as certain social reforms.

During the last year these rights have been exercised. Price liberalisation, wage freezes or cuts, large scale closures and redundancies, a stalled process of political reform—all of these have moved hundreds of thousands to protest. In a climate of growing economic crisis and social tension these protests can prove too challenging to regimes committed to austerity packages.

So despite the establishment of parliaments and "free elections" the newly won rights are everywhere being threatened. Society is polarising and sharp clashes between the workers intent on defending themselves and the restorationists, who are determined to press onto the free market whatever the social cost, are breaking out. Strikes in Poland and Czechoslovakia, demonstrations in Bulgaria are all manifestations of this.

Potential

It is this polarisation that is giving rise to the emergence of potential dictators, potential Bonapartes in Eastern Europe. Bonapartism is named after Napoleon Bonaparte, the military dictator who rose to power in France after the revolution of 1789 had been checked by counter-revolution in 1794, and who claimed to stand as the saviour of the whole nation, independent of the political parties.

But while he at least represented the confident and expansionist early bourgeoisie, capitalism in its imperialist epoch tends to produce what Trotsky called a more senile form of Bonapartism, a Bonapartism of desperation. In terms that could well be applied to Poland today, Trotsky wrote:

"This self-liquidation of democracy in the struggle against right and left brings to the fore the Bonapartism of degeneration, which needs both the left and right danger for its uncertain existence in order to play them off against one another and to progressively raise itself above society and its parliamentarism."

This danger is present throughout Eastern Europe and will become more threatening over the next

Inside the Soviet Union and throughout Eastern Europe there is extensive talk of the need for "special powers". Gorbachev is demanding them. So too is his rival Yeltsin. Lech Walesa in Poland portrays himself as a strongman, a saviour of the nation. Keith Harvey analyses this creeping Bonapartism and highlights the dangers it poses to the working class.

couple of years. Disorder in the economy will lead to strife on the streets. Hopes betrayed will lead to despair and illusions in the promises of would-be dictators. The call for order from the peasantry, the developing middle classes and even from sections of the old bureaucracy will embolden either existing presidents or aspiring army officers to press their claims for limitless executive powers in the name of rescuing the nation.

One of the fundamental features of Bonapartism is a tendency to politically expropriate the parties of the various classes in society in order to push through decisive measures that are incapable of being achieved by ordinary means. By investing a Vaclav Havel or a Lech Walesa with the powers of president the pro-bourgeois forces achieve something very important. They grant to one person—usually someone with enormous personal authority—the power to cut through the stalemates and logjams that come with parliaments split between rival parties, and even the power to breach the constitution, in order to push through the necessary measures against resistance from below.

The attraction is that this person often has the democratic mandate

reality, only the freedom necessary for a defence of the privileged."

In Poland Walesa is a classic Bonapartist figure. During the elections last November he made as the central axis of his campaign the claim that he was the man who could "synchronise" the plans of the government with the needs of the public. His authority derives from Solidarnosc's struggle against the Stalinists, which he led ten years ago. In reality his political base in Solidarnosc and his preferred policies are those of the Catholic right wing nationalist populists who want to speed up of the process of economic transformation.

Extreme

But he deliberately resists both the claims of the left in Solidarnosc (Michnik) and those of the more extreme right wing (Andrzej Gwiazda) who accused him of betrayal for entering into the round-table talks instead of espousing a programme of persecution of the old communists. Walesa speaks of the need for "Poland to walk on a left and a right leg".

In the face of the workers' present struggles against the government's wages tax (the *popiwek* strikes)

point where deep social cleavages erupted that forced Walesa to resort to the National Security Council and the whole array of presidential powers with which he is armed.

In the Soviet Union Gorbachev is an example of another type of Bonapartism: Soviet Bonapartism. Whilst it has some characteristics in common with those we can observe in Poland it does have a different social basis. Gorbachev is the internal arbiter of a ruling Stalinist bureaucracy that is deeply divided over whether to make the transition to capitalism.

Gorbachev's own programme is for radical market reforms that stop short of full scale capitalism inside the Soviet Union. He wants this to take place in the context of a renegotiated but unified Union of all the republics. But either side of him he feels the pressure of more radical and more conservative forces.

On the one side stand the radical pro-capitalist faction of Inter-Regional Deputies headed by Boris Yeltsin. This group rests on the disenchanted masses, demagogically promising them freedom and prosperity under the unfettered rule of the market. On the other side is the still powerful hierarchy based on the heavy industrial en-

At the December Congress of Peoples' Deputies he demanded and got a massive increase in his presidential powers to rule by decree. He purged his Bonapartist clique of radicals and replaced them with figures drawn from the KGB, the MVD (interior ministry) and the CPSU bureaucracy.

Yet even after his concessions to the conservatives, which led to a greater degree of centralisation and economic co-ordination, he has now struck a deal with Yeltsin over the fate of the republics within the Union. His Bonapartist manoeuvring is increasingly restricted by the pressure of both sides and by the fact that he, unlike Walesa, has no real mass base in society at large to whom he can appeal over the heads of the rival camps. He has no franchise for his Bonapartism since he was not elected to his office by a popular vote.

Weak

Deprived of genuine authority Gorbachev resorts to the weak and desperate ploy of plebiscitary rule. At the April Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee, Gorbachev—subject to intense criticism from all sides—offered his resignation. In the past Gorbachev has made such threats to the Supreme Soviet. By these means he tries to cow both camps into submission. He threatens them by demanding they choose between him or chaos.

On policy issues he resorts to the referendum, thereby by-passing the channels of elected representatives. In March he did this with his terms for the new Union treaty between the republics. As Trotsky noted:

"The democratic ritual of Bonapartism is the plebiscite. From time to time the question is presented to the citizens: for or against the leader? And the voter feels the barrel of a gun between his shoulders."

The problem for Gorbachev is that his is the Bonapartism of a declining and historically bankrupt ruling caste. It has no future. His own preferred policies have been tried and found wanting in the East European states during the 1960s and 70s; history has moved on and demands more radical solutions. He can only approximate to his own course by ever greater zig zags between the policies of the rival camps on either side of him.

Ultimatums

So even when he resorts to plebiscites and ultimatums they do not fundamentally work: his resignation is turned down but he continues to pursue the policies of others; he wins a small majority for the Union treaty but it is a dead letter on the next day and he has to concede more to the radicals.

Walesa's Bonapartism is the rule of a victorious pro-bourgeois class that draws upon a popular vote and moral authority for harsh measures against the temporisers. By contrast, Gorbachev is the internal arbiter of a caste doomed to fail, himself bereft of a popular mandate and workable policies. But in both cases the working class must wake up to the dangers they face.

The economic crisis of the USSR and the process of capitalist restoration in Eastern Europe both demand, from the point of view of the rulers, tough measures. The working class must be made to pay, no matter what.

If they cannot be hoodwinked into collaborating into this via parliamentary democracy or *glasnost* then they will be battered into accepting it by police clubs. And it will be a Bonaparte, free of the need to justify himself to any democratic forums, who will send in those police. ■

Capitalism in its imperialist epoch tends to produce what Trotsky called a more senile form of Bonapartism, a Bonapartism of desperation

from a popular vote. They project themselves and their office as standing above the squabbling parties and even "selfish" class interests, and represent the best interests of the "nation". Walesa rode to power on exactly such claims.

Despite appearances the only interests that the president serves are those of the system and class which framed a constitution to allow the presidency to raise itself above the warring classes. Trotsky observed that

"... Bonapartism enters the scene of history in those moments of history when the sharp struggle of two camps raises the state power, so to speak, above the nation, and guarantees it, in appearance, a complete independence of classes—in

Walesa sympathises with the workers, allows his Consultative Committee to issue semi-critical statements of the government. By these means he wins the workers' support. At the same time he insists that their demands cannot be met, that there is no alternative to austerity at the moment and that all must be patient. He offers himself as all things to all people, balancing his power by playing the conflicting forces off against each other.

At present then Walesa is a critical guardian of the government's programme. Despite appearances he is using his office to push through pro-capitalist measures whenever they might meet resistance from the Sejm. But his real Bonapartist value would become obvious at the

terprises, the military and the security services. They too accept the need for some reforms to address a decade of economic stagnation, but not at the cost of the break up of the union, or giving too much away to imperialism in exchange for economic aid.

Between 1987 and the end of last year Gorbachev increasingly sided with the radical marketeers and their mass base in order to break through the obstacles erected by the conservatives. But as *perestroika* and *glasnost* only led to economic disintegration, rather than revitalisation, and to the rapid break up of the Union, Gorbachev responded to the heightened pressure of the conservatives last winter and veered towards them.



Two faces of Bonapartism

Romania's slow road to the market

IN PLACE of the Iron Curtain dividing East from West Europe another curtain is being drawn between Central Europe and the Balkans. In these two parts of Eastern Europe real and significant differences have emerged in the pattern of capitalist restoration.

In Central Europe the ruling Stalinist caste has seen its power destroyed. Its political parties (even where they changed their names) have been purged from government and the rest of the state machine. Although they may have pockets of support in the workers' movement they have no influence upon the governments.

In the Balkan countries—Romania, Bulgaria and Albania—matters stand differently. Here parts of the old ruling caste itself either took the initiative in bringing down the discredited ruling clique, or usurped leadership of the movements that did. They have professed their admiration for the market without becoming evangelists for neo-liberalist capitalism.

They have embarked on the process of turning themselves into social democrats rather than Stalinists. But unlike Eastern Europe major elements of the old nomenklatura (as opposed to the much narrower dynastic cliques) remain and are keeping their hands

BY MARK ABRAMS

on key levers of state power and economic management.

For the moment they are continuing to use the centralised planning mechanisms but their main purpose in so doing is to allow them to transform their caste privileges into legally sanctioned private property—wealth.

Merit

Romania is furthest down this road. The revolution of December 1989 had the merit of destroying the Ceausescu clique and its armed praetorian guard and thus cleared some of the major obstacles both to working class political power and to the restoration of capitalism.

The National Salvation Front (NSF) formed the first provisional government on 22 December 1989. It had its power confirmed in free elections in March 1990 and still holds the reins. In the next period any significant political developments will appear as a differentiation within the NSF.

Originally the NSF denied it was a party and claimed it was only a broad mass movement, with diverse political tendencies, "an alliance of all patriotic and democratic forces". Recently the calls for a clear turn to make it a social democratic

outfit became more audible. On 17 and 18 March the NSF held its first convention. Some 1,119 delegates decided to redefine it as a "centre-leftist party of social democratic orientation" in a conference which, despite the existence of clearly identifiable right and left wings, displayed considerable and unexpected unanimity.

The NSF government has taken some preliminary steps towards the market. In its earliest programme in December 1989 it stated that it would aim to reform the economy "in accordance with criteria of profitability and efficiency" eliminating "centralised economic management".

The monopoly of foreign trade is being slowly eroded. Over 70% of Romanian companies now enjoy some economic autonomy and rights to conduct foreign trade. OECD sales increased by 100% in 1990 to over \$2 billion.

In October 1990 the role of the Romanian National Bank was redefined. All other existing banks were converted into independent units. The Romanian foreign trade bank has officially lost its monopoly on foreign exchange activities, while western banks are expected to open offices in Bucharest this year.

The passage of the "Law on Commercial Companies" in October 1990 legalises the transformation



Protesters in Bucharest last month

of state owned enterprise into joint stock companies, although almost all concerns are still state owned. While 30% of the shares of state owned enterprises have been pledged to private hands, the method of share transfer has yet to be worked out by the State Agency for Privatisations.

Obstacles

But one of the major obstacles to capitalism in Romania is the working class. They are organised in five big federations ranging in membership from one to over three million members. Romania Libera, the main bourgeois opposition daily said that:

"Until the political parties mature, until the electorate develops its political consciousness, the trade unions remain the most significant factor of the opposition in Roma-

nia."

The right wing Brussels based International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) echoed this: "The future of democracy in Romania... does not lie in the hands of students, intellectuals, or political parties but in those of the trade unions."

What they recognise is that capitalism without the nomenklatura in the driving seat means repeating in Romania what we witnessed in Poland; namely, the triumph of right wing open bourgeois forces from within the workers' movement—a Solidarnosc.

To date the prospects for this are mixed. Many of the unions are anti-communist and pro-market; some are still tied to the NSF. But virtually all are fighting against the effects of unemployment and wage freezes and prices rises.

The plan expects real wages to fall by 30-40%, as wages will be indexed below the level of expected price rises. The official forecast predicts unemployment will rise to 462,000, about 4% in 1991. However, Eugen Dijmarescu, the Minister for Economic Affairs, said in September that the underlying level of unemployment was about 10% of the workforce. The government has begun to attack the heavy industries.

Unemployment

A government spokesman told the official press agency on January 8 that "200,000 metal workers and miners working in non-ferrous pits will be made redundant and will get 50% of their pay for the next month". This figure included workers who will have to re-qualify for their jobs and the total level of unemployment amongst them is expected to be 60,000. Considering the importance of these sectors for the NSF, in the suppression of the students for example, it is obvious that such measures could rapidly undermine the NSF's key bases of support.

In January and February 1991 a wave of industrial strikes forced the NSF to respond with new legislation restricting strikes and drafting young union leaders into the army. This too will assist the right wing in their project of capturing and unifying the large, heterogeneous and disunited trade union movement behind them and against the forces loyal to the NSF. ■

ON 26 April fifty million workers in the Russian Federation held a protest strike against massive price rises. At the same time, key sections of the bureaucratic caste, that holds power in the Soviet Union, rallied behind the plans of Gorbachev and his Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov for a new "especially strict working regime", and a sustained clampdown on the working class.

Previously, the more special decrees Gorbachev declared the more they were ignored. But this time Gorbachev gained the support of the leaders of nine Soviet republics. They have all put their names to a declaration calling for an end to the wave of strikes, the restoration of "order" and the institution of an ominous "anti-crisis plan". The most significant aspect of this latest turn of events is that the Declaration has received the approval of Gorbachev's arch rival, Boris Yeltsin.

Yeltsin had previously expressed support for the miners' current strike, encouraging their demands for Gorbachev's resignation. His about turn can only be explained because of concessions Gorbachev is prepared to make to the republics over more autonomy and not blocking the path to independence. Less than a month after receiving a referendum majority for his own proposals on the relations between the Union and the republics, Gorbachev has been forced to retreat again.

Reaction to Yeltsin's move has been mixed. The strike committee in the Kuzbass condemned the declaration, and sent a telegram to Yeltsin demanding that he explain

USSR: Pavlov reaction

BY RICHARD BRENNER

himself. But in the Belorussian capital of Minsk, the strike committee suspended its action until 21 May and in Vorkuta and Siberia some pits have returned to work.

This is the sort of response that Pavlov hoped to get by drawing in support from radical deputies, the leaderships of the republics, and political forces outside the Communist Party. The aim of the manoeuvre is to compromise his opponents in the eyes of the most resolute sections of the masses whilst drawing in the broadest political backing for an attack on the working class.

Pavlov's "anti-crisis plan" is just such an attack. More cautious than Shatalin's notorious 500 day plan, it is nonetheless a clear attempt at controlled marketisation, to be carried out at the expense of the working class. Alongside incentives to private enterprise and foreign investors, it proposes cuts in subsidies and a kind of social contract between the government, managers and workers in order to hold down wage rises by tying them to productivity.

This means further misery and deprivation for Soviet workers. Pavlov himself estimates that implementation of the plan would lead to a 13% fall in production and an unspecified rise in unemployment. All of this would be implemented in the face of a working class whose hatred of the

bureaucracy and its party, the CPSU, grows deeper by the day. This is evidenced by moves on the part of workers to dissolve the CPSU's workplace committees, and by persistent and growing calls for Gor-



bachev to resign. The weakness of this last demand is that it raises the question of who should replace him. Neither Yeltsin nor the conservatives can be trusted by the mass of workers.

The immediate task of the workers is to build independent factory committees and cross-industrial delegate councils. They must redouble efforts to build a national trade union federation to co-ordinate the fight around pay and conditions,

combat the new labour discipline and crush the draconian repressive laws, the dictatorship of the party and the rule of its Bonaparte, Mikhail Gorbachev.

Soviet workers must learn from Yeltsin's support for the declaration that his support for working class rights and criticism of the government's economic strategy are pure rhetoric and deceit. He may no longer be in the party, but he is flesh and blood of the bureaucracy.

Workers in the USSR have massive illusions in the market and capitalism. They must wake up to the fact that their reintroduction requires the smashing of working class resistance to higher prices, to poor working conditions and to the closures that would follow privatisation.

It requires the erosion of any democratic rights such as the right to strike, if they are used really to defend the interests of the workers.

The working class must fight for a new, emergency workers' plan, and a revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy and replace them with a free and voluntary Soviet federation ruled by democratic workers' councils.

To win workers to this perspective, the only one that could prevent the catastrophe of capitalist restoration, the Soviet working class need neither Gorbachev nor Yeltsin, but a revolutionary party of their own. ■

SINN FEIN

Who's fooling who?

According to Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams, the Brooke talks, "like all previous initiatives, were part of a British strategy to defeat Irish republicanism". Adams is absolutely correct. Who could think otherwise after the Anglo-Irish Agreement? But Adams and Sinn Fein have short memories. Less than two years ago the same Brooke was hailed by none other than hard-line Martin McGuinness and other leading Derry republicans as the most far-sighted British politician since Gladstone, a man with whom Sinn Fein would be glad to do business.

The occasion for this strange accolade was Brooke's statement that if the armed struggle ended, republicans could legitimately expect a seat at the conference table to argue for their "perfectly legitimate" goal of Irish self-determination.

As the IWG said at the time, the whole thing was little more than a crude manoeuvre aimed at deepening divisions at a moment when it seemed the ballot box/armalite strategy of the Provisionals was falling apart. Mounting civilian casualties, the set-back at the polls North and South, the defeat of the Nicaraguan Sandinistas—all had created a mood of demoralisation in the movement.

Brooke's immediate hopes were dashed as the republican movement, for the time being at least, resolved its differences around a stepping up of the armed struggle. The extension of the military campaign abroad, attacks upon workers serving installations of the enemy, proxy bombs, the return to the economic targets of the 1970s, point to a desperate attempt, through the propaganda of the deed, to show that Ulster remains ungovernable.

But Brooke has pursued his course and the talks will begin. So what attitude does Sinn Fein take? The SDLP and Dublin government's participation in the forth-

1916 leaders . . . shame is the real reason so many in the establishment do not want 1916 commemorated." (*Derry Journal*, 19.4.91)

Never mind the fact that the 1916 proclamation was a document deliberately wretched in the most vague and pious promises, all the better to conceal the different class interests of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and Connolly's Citizens' Army. The real shame lies in the fact that such remarks underline the continued inability of republicans to come to terms with the class nature of Irish society and the forces at work within Irish social and political life.

Indeed throughout its whole history republicanism has sought to blur at every crucial point of struggle what otherwise are the crystal clear and fundamental class issues of everyday life in Ireland.

Heartfelt calls to Hume and Haughey "to stand up to the British government, to secure a national and international consensus for unity and independence", and the time-honoured moralistic abuse of the enemy as traitors, fudges the grim reality of an Ireland where the conflict between exploiter and exploited has always been open, naked and brutal. Republican claptrap such as this has simply strengthened nationalism at a time when objectively it has been in decline as social, economic and cultural changes have taken place in the last twenty years.

The pan-Catholic nationalist bloc built by Sinn Fein around the H-Block struggle, and more recently



In 1981 Sinn Fein wooed Haughey. Today they are still peddling illusions in him

NEW ZEALAND

Trade unions under attack

ON 18 APRIL the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (CTU) refused to call a general strike for 30 April to stop the Employment Contracts Bill. The purpose of the Bill—due to be law from mid-May—is to restore to the employers the absolute right to decide whether or not to enter into collective contracts with employees. Essentially it is giving them a free hand to hire and fire.

A century ago when New Zealand was emerging as a weak capitalist semi-colony, labour legislation was passed establishing a state labour court to arbitrate between workers and employers. Unions which broke out of the system to fight for better wages and conditions were replaced by state-run scab unions. However, in the post-Second World War period, protection of domestic manufacturing, near full employment and state spending on social services also "protected" the labour movement which made huge gains in wages and conditions.

This social harmony blew apart in the 1970s when domestic production outstripped the local market and had to be restructured to become internationally competitive. From 1975 successive governments acted to deregulate and open up the economy to market forces. The six years (1984-90) of the Labour Government's "Rogernomics" (after Rogers, the Finance Minister) forced the pace, removing import protection, privatising most of the state sector and partially privatising state health, education and other social services.

The National Government, elected in October 1990 on a programme of Rogernomics-plus, immediately moved to cut social spending and destroy the power of the unions, seen as the last barriers to international competitiveness. These moves were also a desperate bid to enliven an economy that has registered virtually no growth since early 1986.

Given the severity of the crisis and of the Government's attack, a general strike movement was necessary to force this Bill off the order

paper. On 4 April 100,000, out of a population of around three million, took to the streets. During the CTU organised "Week of Action" from 5-9 April, more and more workers took to the streets with slogans such as "Kill the Bill". CTU boss Ken Douglas tried to head off the militant mood with inflammatory rhetoric and vague promises to fight the total economic policy of the Government . . . some time in the future.

The CTU officials have always accepted the bosses' rule. Today they accept the need to deregulate the labour market to restore profits. Naturally, they would prefer to be "consulted" to avoid being deregulated out of existence as well. When the first draft of the Bill was served up to them they were horrified. This was their reward for all they had done under Labour to prove their credentials to the bosses: presiding over 300,000 unemployed, falling real wages and growing cuts in the social wage!

But the National Government needs much bigger concessions. When the Bill was introduced in December last year there was no recognised role for trade unions and their leadership. This upset not only the CTU, whose fate hinged upon the freedom of choice of employers, but also many employers, who have found the CTU willing accomplices in negotiating favourable site and enterprise agreements such as those at Nissan and Fisher and Paykel.

So the CTU and the big employers made submissions to the Select Committee to try to amend the Bill and legalise the "responsible" role of unions where the bosses agree to collective agreements—that is, company unions.

Still the National Government played hard to get. So the CTU set out to prove itself. In the weeks and months leading up to the Bill becoming law, union after union rushed into new contracts, making major concessions to prove to the Select Committee that they could be more socially responsible than employers and could take away more hard won conditions in less

time than even the Business Roundtable dreamed of.

Where national awards have been retained, as in the state services sector, unions have foregone wage increases and other conditions. In the tourism sector workers have lost weekend penal rates and conceded youth rates. Most unions however, like the wharfies (dockers), seafarers and restaurant workers, have had site or enterprise agreements imposed on them, anticipating the intention of the new Bill.

The CTU alliance with the large employers to modify the Bill worked. The new provisions recognise unions as parties to collective agreements and, where written into agreements, gives them the right to represent new employees.

To ensure that employers do agree to collective agreements, unions will have to confine workers' demands to those acceptable to employers—wage increases subordinated to increasing productivity. The bosses have also written in further safeguards to their interests. The right to strike is limited to the negotiating phase of collective agreements—with an equal right of lockout!

If this deal is allowed to stand, the outcome would be a radically restructured labour movement similar to "third-world" semi-colonies. The workforce would become divided into a small labour aristocracy served by company unions, and a growing casual, part-time, under and unemployed non-unionised reserve army. Workers would be exposed to the "free forces" of the labour market in a deteriorating world economy, and a reconstituted reserve of domestic and voluntary workers resulting from the massive cuts in the social wage.

Such an outcome would exacerbate divisions along skill, ethnic and gender lines and undermine the ability of the working class to unite to oppose further drastic attacks on its wages, conditions and basic rights. Such an outcome cannot be tolerated for one minute by any class conscious or militant worker. ■

"Ruling by fooling is a great British art—with great Irish fools to practice on". James Connolly's remarks are entirely relevant to the latest Brooke negotiations with Ulster Unionism and the SDLP. But, asks Eddie Bell of the Irish Workers' Group, who are the fools and who the wise?

coming talks is characteristically described as the action of traitors, betraying the "real" interests of the Irish nation. In Derry, at a recent Sinn Fein conference, Adams put it like this:

"The key question must be, however, has Charlie Haughey the courage to develop a coherent strategy which can advance Irish national interest, or are these interests going to be surrendered yet again before British interests and unionist intransigence? Mr Haughey has a duty and a responsibility to represent the Irish national interest."

In criticising the Irish bourgeoisie's attempt to distance themselves from their own revolutionary heritage Martin McGuinness said:

"They know they have failed miserably to achieve the aim of the

around the anti-extradition campaign, simply disintegrated in the heat of battle because they consciously turned their backs on any attempt to mobilise the victims of the economic policies of successive Irish capitalist governments. Within the last five years the Fianna Fail government has acted hand in glove with British imperialism in every repressive attempt to attack republicans and any who support them.

Simultaneously the same government has carried on a massive onslaught on the living standards, wages and conditions of the Irish working class in the South. It is this reality, the living experiences of the masses North and South, that should be the starting point for building a mass working class led fight against the policies of both governments in Ireland and the capitalist system as a whole.

If it is to go on to victory this fight can have no truck with Adams' utopian pipe-dream of a "new nation democracy", with a mixed economy. It must rather set its sights clearly on the only goal that can mean national and social freedom, Connolly's workers' republic. The lessons of twenty years show that the struggle for socialism and national freedom will not be achieved by such as today's republican movement. And that is fooling no one. ■

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SINCE THE *Workers Press* group emerged from the ruins of Gerry Healy's old Workers Revolutionary Party it has become increasingly clear that it has rejected not merely Healyism's grotesque parody of Trotskyism, but revolutionary Trotskyism itself. The April trade union conference provided an illustration of this.

In their call for the conference the Workers' International recognised the importance of the development of new workers' movements in Eastern Europe and the USSR. They argued that there were real possibilities for the rebirth of Trotskyism within these countries. But it is quite clear that they do not believe this can be done by fighting for the Trotskyist programme amongst the Soviet and East European workers. Instead, the new Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) emphasised the importance of sharing experiences with and learning from these workers and other trade union movements across the world.

Now it is certainly necessary for Trotskyists to learn from the living struggles of the world working class. Trotskyists do not counterpose ready made schemas to the class struggle. But nor do we enter those struggles with our hands in the air protesting that we have nothing to offer. Quite the reverse.

Counterpose

We base our intervention in the workers' movement on the firm belief that Trotskyism's programme can offer leadership to the world working class, that it can take the living struggle forward. We test and refine the programme in the light of experience, but we do not abandon it in the name of "learning from experience".

The Workers' International reject this Trotskyist approach:

"Unlike intellectuals workers do not become convinced by arguments alone. And so our aim is to work together with those who are fighting for change in the trade unions, proposing the lines of struggle on which they are already embarked, first and foremost the fight for independence of the trade unions from the state and from the employers, for workers' democracy and for international working class solidarity." (*The International No4*)

Important as they are, the struggle for independence from the state, for workers' democracy, and international solidarity are not the only, or even in certain circumstances the most important, struggles to take up inside the trade unions. For a group that claims to be Trotskyist, to limit itself to "proposing lines of struggle on which [the workers] are already embarked" is not Trotskyism but "tailism", a worship of the "spontaneity" of the workers' movement, a political method that Lenin correctly stigmatised as economism.

Tailism

This tailism by the WRP leadership infected the whole debate over what demands should be raised in the trade unions. Workers Power and LRCI delegates were declared "programme fetishists" who thought there was a ready made programme that could be argued amongst workers in the Soviet Union. It was not possible, the WRP told us, to have "ready made answers from the 1938 *Transitional Programme*". We had to "learn from the struggles and experiences of workers". It was this conception that led to the constant refrain that the purpose of the conference was to establish an organisation where "workers could share common experiences".

What lay behind this was the

WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL

Last month an international conference of around one hundred trade unionists met under the auspices of the Workers' International. Most of those attending were from the British Workers Revolutionary Party (*Workers Press*). This is the principal organisation behind the Workers' International. Delegates from Workers Power and the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) attended this conference. **John Mckee reports**



Workers Press are indifferent as to whether these Polish miners' pits are privatised

In flight from Trotskyism

desire of opportunists to swim with the stream and avoid raising demands that they believed would be unpopular with the masses in struggle. The debate over whether the workers in Eastern Europe and the USSR should commit themselves to the defence of the planned property relations clearly highlighted this.

Whole sections of the newly emerging independent trade union movement, for example the miners, have enormous illusions in the capitalist market. They associate socialist planning with Stalinism's monstrous bureaucratic command economy. This leads many workers to reject the very idea of a nationalised planned economy. Some look to the west to take over the indus-

try, others want "self-management", still others want free trade zones linked directly to the west. As an editorial from the Workers' International put it in one of the conference bulletins:

from the capitalists and transformed into state property", not the Stalinist bureaucratic regime. Of course, we have to develop and concretise our programme in relation to the conditions and struggles that the Soviet and East European workers face. It has to be combined with a patient explanation of why ideas such as "self-management" or workers' control in privatised industries are at best utopian and at worst play into the hands of the restorationists. But none of this was to be found in the main resolution or in the resolution on Eastern Europe.

The resolution "The way forward for trade unions" which dealt with what should be argued in the trade unions east and west made no

"In the Soviet Union we fight for workers' control and workers' management of enterprises. This means access to all accounts and plans, to all information necessary for the running of the plants as well as the state budget. Defend the property of the workers and peasants from privatisation, under the ownership of the bureaucrats, from private capitalists and from the imperialist monopolies! For social ownership of the means of production and a democratic workers' plan drawn up by a congress of workers delegates."

A WRP leader, Simon Pirani, told the conference that this position was ludicrous because there was no plan in the Soviet Union! How the Soviet economy functioned

If we are not to just sit back and watch the workers of Eastern Europe and the USSR suffer a terrible defeat we have to try and give programmatic answers that can break workers from their illusions in capitalism

mention of the necessity for trade unionists to reject the restoration of private capitalism, to defend the nationalised property, and proceed to wrench the plan out of the hands of the bureaucrats and establish a plan based on workers' needs and controlled by the workers themselves.

Workers Power delegates moved the following amendment:

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Pirani did not deign to tell us. Is the law of value, the market, the dominant force in the economy? Has capitalism been restored? Or is it some new kind of economy that functions on "planlessness" or "waste"? In this argument Pirani was only echoing WRP leader, Cliff Slaughter, who argued, on the basis of a short stay in the USSR, that its crisis "calls into question the character of the USSR as a workers' state. It calls it into question now". The fact that this leaves the Workers' International without an analysis of the class nature of the Soviet Union doesn't worry these would-be leaders of the world proletariat.

The real reason for the opposition to the defence of planning is rooted in the WRP's economism. If they did adopt the Trotskyist position it would bring the Workers' International into conflict with the dominant ideas of the leaders of the emerging new unions. They are not prepared to risk such a conflict.

Pirani, adapting to these leaders, was willing to use any argument to bolster his rejection of the defence of planned property relations. He declared:

"The market cannot be extinguished in any one country. That was the utopian idea behind Stalin's socialism in one country."

To argue that all the elements of the market cannot be extinguished this side of world socialism is one thing. To blithely argue for the necessity of the market in a situation where planned property relations are in the process of being dismantled throughout Eastern Europe, and are under attack in the Soviet Union, is a disastrous argument, one that provides a "Marxist gloss" to a reactionary pro-bourgeois position.

Another confusion dominated this conference. What sort of movement in the trade unions was the Workers' International trying to build and what was its relationship to the revolutionary party? While there was much orthodox talk of "revolutionising the trades unions" of "renewing them from top to bottom" it was clear that the WRP leadership had no time for the methods, developed by the Comintern and the Fourth International in their revolutionary periods, for work in the trades unions.

This is the method of building a militant minority within the trades unions around a fighting action programme, a programme which is based on the system of transitional demands but focused on the particular national and trade union situation. Using the united front method within the trade unions such a programme can unite militant and socialist workers with the Trotskyist trade unionists and set about turning the minority into a majority in the trade union movement.

Short-cut

The leaders of the WRP have no time for such a tactic. For them it is necessary to find a short-cut, to build a movement which attempts to win over the entire leaderships of the independent trade unions emerging in the east. And to do this you cannot be too choosy about programmatic demands which would alienate these new movements or their leaderships. This is a rotten method that leads to capitulation to the politics of these leaders rather than a struggle to win the rank and file to revolutionary politics.

This trade union policy reflects the WRP's method for building the International itself. The Workers' International's aim is to "set about the reconstruction of the Fourth International in and through the reconstruction of the working class movement as a whole".

While the leaders of the WRP are coy in spelling it out, their perspective is to build an International in stages. First, win the workers' movement to a "Workers' International" which will not be a Trotskyist one. Then set about "reconstructing the Fourth International".

The International Trade Union conference gave a clear indication of the unprincipled compromises and dumping of the Trotskyist programme that the WRP was willing to live with "to win the masses" to its International. It confirmed that the WRP is an organisation in full flight from Trotskyism. ■

Workers power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

INSIDE

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- The pay fight
- Satanism and child abuse

Price 40p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

Strike against the cuts!

TWO MORE years of the Poll Tax. After that it will be either the Tory Council Tax or Labour's Fair Rates. The working class should resist both.

The Council Tax is a version of the rates. What you will pay depends on the estimated value of your property.

Once the government have decided its value they will place you in one of nine bands and you will pay the appropriate tax for that band. There is an upper limit on property valuation of £160,000. There will be 25% discounts for people living alone.

While bills will be lower than the Poll Tax in the short term it is really still no fairer because there is no progressive element to the tax. Whatever your income, simply because you live in a house or flat that unaccountable government valuers estimate is expensive, you will have to pay more.

In areas where property prices are high, like the south east, workers who have no option but to mortgage themselves to the hilt will be paying around the same amount as the wealthy.

The £160,000 limit ensures that the rich are going to get a good deal. Their country mansions will be banded at the same level as an inner-city London terraced house. Second homes (how many workers have these?) will be taxed less. And the 25% discount is across the board.

Rich and the poor alike who live alone will get the same rebate. Worst of all the Tories are openly talking about "adjusting benefits"

for the poorest, to make sure they pay more under the new scheme.

Labour's Fair Rates are not much better. They will work on the same principle but would be slightly cheaper because of a bigger government subsidy. An unusual instance of Labour's generous spirit? Not at all.

Labour will get the money by keeping the current increased levels of VAT, which they hypocritically denounced when it was raised in March. This means that we would pay for the council subsidy every time we buy essential items.

The real answer to local government funding is to tax the rich. A steeply progressive local wealth tax would ensure that the bosses were made to pay for services that are essential to workers leading a decent life.

But this challenges the entire logic of the Tory/Labour argument about how to finance local government. They are both scheming to make us pay, one way or another. And both are prepared to attack us through cuts in local expenditure in order to balance their books.

The Poll Tax debacle has created enormous problems amongst the councils. And the councils are making cuts in services and jobs to

get themselves out of these problems. In Derbyshire the County Council is pushing through a £37 million cuts package and an estimated 2,000 job cuts. In Liverpool the council is trying to impose 1,000 redundancies as part of their cuts. In Lambeth, Manchester, Birmingham, everywhere, the story is the same. Cuts and sackings, often carried out by Labour run councils.

We must organise to stop these cuts from going through now. The 350 Liverpool workers on indefinite strike show the way. These workers were supported by an estimated 27,000 (out of a 29,000 workforce) who took selective action against the redundancies in April. In Derbyshire and Lambeth there have also been strikes against the cuts.

The Tories believe that they have "unravellled the knot" of the Poll Tax, as their chairman Chris Patten put. We need to turn it into a noose that can strangle them by building indefinite strike action of all council workers facing cuts and redundancies.

In every town and city the basis exists for winning the consumers of council services to the side of the council workers. In Derbyshire links have been made across the

unions. In Liverpool a Joint Trades Union Committee exists.

Delegates need to be drawn in from every sector of the working class community with the clear goal of organising mass action against the cutting councils.

In many respects waging such battles now will be key to defending trade unionism within local government in the future. The Tories' alternative to the Poll Tax is not just about finance. They are aiming to restructure local government through the creation of single councils under tight central government control.

By these means they aim to put a stop to local "over spending" and break the town hall unions. It would not come as a surprise to anyone if it was discovered that Heseltine was financially backing Liverpool Labour Council in its stand against the unions because he understands that to break the unions here will make it easier elsewhere.

The Tories are not strong at the moment. We don't have to wait for Labour to defend our services, because in many cases it is Labour that is attacking them. We can and we must fight now.

- Unite the council struggles!
- Strike against the cuts!



Solidarity with the Kurds

WHILE THEY are on the mountains around 2,000 Kurdish refugees are dying every day of exposure and hunger. Over two million are suffering without adequate shelter on Iraq's borders with Turkey and Iran. They have been driven out of their own country, victims of Saddam Hussein's ruthless repression.

These obscene statistics need to be put alongside the losses suffered by the other victims of the Gulf War and its aftermath: anti-Saddam Shi'ite insurgents, Kuwaiti Palestinians, Iraqi soldiers and civilians. The real death toll of the imperialist west's latest intervention into the Middle East must now number many hundreds of thousands.

The Kurdish rebels deserve the full support of socialists and the labour movement as a whole. Their territory has been carved up between five states, they have had their national rights denied, their culture suppressed. All socialists and consistent democrats should recognise the right of the Kurds to determine their own future free from national oppression and imperialist intervention, including the right to genuine autonomy or full independence if they so choose.

Major and Bush solicit plaudits for their belated aid. Hypocrites! These mass murderers gave covert support to Saddam when he crushed the Iraqi and Kurdish insurgents. They wanted a palace coup to oust Saddam and guard their oil interests, not a mass popular rising that could ignite the region and throw imperialism out for good.

No wonder so many Kurds regard the US/British proposal for "safe havens" with suspicion. Major and Bush are not acting out of the goodness of their hearts. They have refused to allow the Kurdish fighters to operate from the occupied zone. Even if some Kurds initially welcome the imperialist forces, they will soon see how US or UN troops will be used to hold back the Kurdish struggle. As soon as there is a dictator in Baghdad that the USA can trust, they will abandon the Kurds without a second thought.

Socialists should be holding meetings in every workplace to discuss the plight of the Kurds and to organise material solidarity with the Kurdish forces in their fight for national liberation.

- No to US/UK, UN or Ba'athist occupation of Kurdistan!
- For the right of the Kurdish people to self-determination!

Now turn to pages 8-9 and 10

FOR A WEALTH TAX NOT A COUNCIL TAX!